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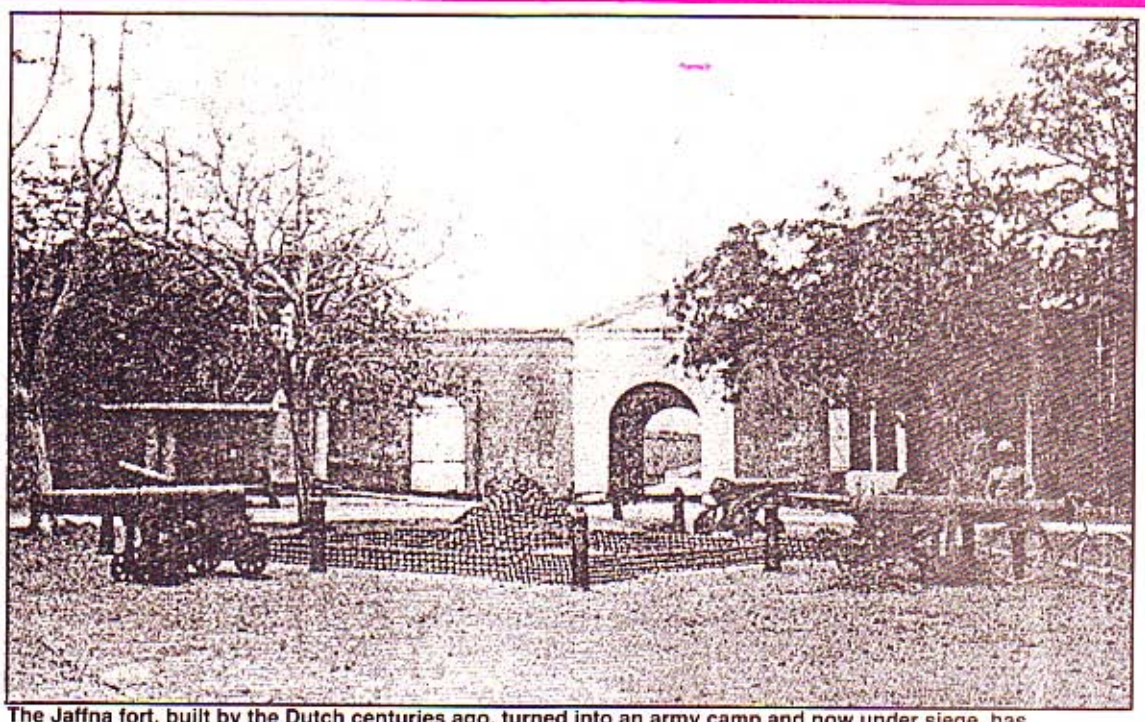
★ Politics Takes a Back Seat as War Enters Third Month

An Appeal From the Voiceless Masses

The North–East: Getting Back to Fundamentals



The Jaffna fort, built by the Dutch centuries ago, turned into an army camp and now under siege, has become the focal point of the war in north Sri Lanka between government forces and the LTTE.

★LTTE Seeks Indian Support

★ EDP MPs Quit

★ Refugee Influx

★ Civilians to be Uprooted From Jaffna

★ Massacre in the Mosques

★ Tamils Killed in Revenge

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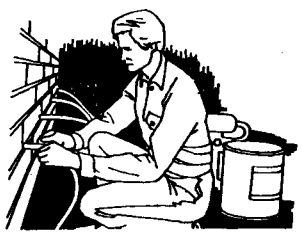

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AN APPEAL FROM THE VOICELESS MASSES

(Instead of our usual comment, we consider it appropriate to adopt and reproduce the appeal by Rev. Dr. S.J. Emmanuel on behalf of the Centre for Better Society based in Jaffna)

The frightening events of the North-Eastern Province urge us to make a fervent appeal on behalf of the voiceless masses, be they Sinhalese, Tamils or Muslims, to all Sri Lankans of good will. After years of death and destruction of lives and property, we were hoping and praying that the lives, already shortened by fears and terrors of war, may still have some chance of peace and stability through the talks which were going on between the LTTE and the Government. In spite of criticism and opposition from selfish politicians and others, both sides did well to trust each other and seek a solution in the interest of peace. But unfortunately the worst has happened and once again a war of death and destruction is at our door, if not on our head.

We have survived much strangulation of our lives – through months of curfew, shortages of the essentials of life, communication and transport. We have survived shells, mortars, helicopter-firings and aerial bombings. Our survival is a miracle. We are proud of our faith – be it Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist or Christian – that has kept alive in us an undying hope about a better tomorrow for justice and peace. But have we the physical and moral strength to go through another war? The signs and voices from the top give us only a mortal fear but no assurance of life.

We are already in a coma with minimum facilities of life. We do not even have the strength to speak up for ourselves! Silence in suffering has become the style of our life. We have only one question: Do we still have a future?

It is not our intention here to blame anyone or try to find out who or what went wrong to reverse the valuable dialogue for peace into a war of this magnitude. But amidst the noise of shells, helicopter-firings and aerial bombings, we are fast losing sight of values like truth, justice, and respect for life. And time is running out.

Forgive us if we sound too demanding on those who are fortunate to live away from these war-torn territories. But to whom shall we appeal, if not to you our brothers and sisters? With death and destruction at our door, we appeal to all peace loving citizens of this country to listen to the feeble voice of the voiceless masses who are still in their wounds but not yet succumbed to death, to the voiceless masses whose left-over properties have been burnt by the fires of hatred, to the voiceless masses who are screaming into kovils, temples, mosques and schools and spend their days looking up for some food and their nights searching for a safe place to rest.

Some of us may try to wave victory flags from one post or the other. We may try our best to cover up or pretend not to hear the cry of the voiceless lest our celebrations be disturbed, lest we be forced to sacrifice some of our comforts. But can we really run away from our conscience.

Much harm is done in this world, not by the activity of the bad people, but by the passivity of the good people. The good citizens of this country have surely much more to do for peace and stability than a mere vote at the elections. The silence of these days in the face of massive death and destruction urges us to ask, 'What has happened to the moral conscience of our leaders? What has happened to the various welfare organizations? What has happened to our religious leaders who have an obligation to be the makers of peace? What has happened to the professionals and intellectuals who are so enlightened about the rights and duties of citizens? What has happened to the business magnates who are so influential in electing governments? Have they all done their best?

Without communications (no newspapers), without transport facilities, not even hospitals for the dying, we are thirsting for truth as well as for peace. We are gripped with fear and the warring factions only terrify us of a worse future. We see only fear and agony written large on the faces of these masses. We do not even have that sufficient hope to share among us.

Are we all going to stand by and helplessly witness in silence the horrors of death and destruction? Are we not obliged to cry out that you, who are outside these dark territories of death and destruction, may hear and come to our aid? You, who are fortunate to be living in some peaceful area of this island, you who are privileged to have a say with those who are in power, please consider your obligation for those who are still in pain, if not in a state of coma, for those who are still very young and have a right for the future. Please do not cordon off our areas as troubled spots and continue your lives undisturbed. Please do not allow a decision that amounts to 'operation successful but patient (Population) died'.

We beg all men of good will in this country, as well as all those who ably represent other countries which can influence our decision-makers, to do their best to stop this senseless war in favour of a meaningful dialogue. We have no confidence in the victory of a war. It can only leave behind a wounded conqueror without even the conquered. We have confidence only in your good will to work for peace. As we close this appeal to you around the early hours of Monday (25/6/90) morning, bombs are falling for the last four hours and the population is literally groaning and dying. We may not live to thank you, but we hope that this letter reaches you for your moment of action for a noble cause – LIFE.

'Jaffna Civilians to be Evacuated'

All civilians in Jaffna are to be advised to vacate the peninsula and move into a massive refugee camp to be opened in Vavuniya to pave the way for the security forces to get at and annihilate the LTTE leadership without harming innocent people. A proposal to this effect would be placed before the President for a decision shortly, Plantation Industries Minister and State Minister for Defence, Ranjan Wijeratne told Parliament on 10 August.

Winding up the debate on the situation in the Eastern Province, Mr. Wijeratne noted that it was imperative to move out the people en masse from the Jaffna peninsula to enable the armed forces to deal with the LTTE and 'thrash them out of sight'. Those who did not heed this warning and remained in the peninsula would have to face the consequences. 'We have to do that. There is no going away. We want the LTTE leadership as much as we wanted the JVP leadership. We have got the means to deal with the LTTE but we don't want any civilian casualties. This proposal when implemented would not only prevent civilian casualties but also help those youths who had been forced to join the LTTE to find their way to the refugee camp and escape death', the Minister said.

Minister Wijeratne explained that his greatest concern was for the civilian population. The LTTE was today hiding in the kitchens of innocent people and saving their necks temporarily. The civilian population was being used as human shields by the LTTE in the continuance of their atrocities.

Once all civilians were vacated from Jaffna peninsula the LTTE could decide whether to face the bullets of the security forces or swim across the Palk Strait to their bosom friend in Tamil Nadu. The LTTE would have no alternative but to either face the wrath of the forces or swallow the cyanide pill should they decide not to do the 'swim' across the Strait.

He noted that all persons from the Jaffna peninsula housed in the Vavuniya refugee camp would be looked after and rehabilitated after the LTTE was eliminated. In desperation the LTTE was today killing innocent civilians. The LTTE should be confronting the forces and engaging them in combat. Instead of that they were attacking and killing innocent people in the East. Muslims were being trained to help the security forces to provide security to villages.

He said that it was only a matter of time to get at the LTTE. If the LTTE thought that they could by their actions force a thin spread of security forces in the East to prevent more troops being moved into the North they were sadly mistaken. The march in the North will continue and the LTTE criminals would be swept into the salty waters of the Indian Ocean.

PLANS TO EVACUATE TAMILS OPPOSED

COLOMBO, Aug 11 – Tamil politicians said that they were strongly opposed to government plans to evacuate hundreds of thousands of civilians from northern Sri Lanka to make way for an all-out assault on separatist guerrillas.

'It is not a practicable plan. How can so many people be asked to move out of their homes just like that?' said Mavai Senathiraja, a Tamil member of parliament.

Deputy Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne said on 10 August that civilians in northern Sri Lanka's Jaffna peninsula – most of them Tamils – would be evacuated in preparation for a major assault on the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Senathiraja, of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front, said Tamil members of parliament wanted a meeting with President Ranasinghe Premadasa to express their opposition.

Other political sources said it would be difficult to move so many people and provide them with shelter, food and security.

Wijeratne said Jaffna civilians would be asked to move to a refugee camp in Vavuniya, 140 km (90 miles) to the south. – Reuter.

'Refugee Colony' Proposal Shot Down

The proposal by the Sri Lankan government to establish a giant refugee centre, a sort of 'Refugee Colony' in the Island of Mannar to take in all Sri Lankan Tamil refugees has failed to get off the ground.

The idea of setting up the refugee centre to be run under the supervision of officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had been initially put forward by the Sri Lankan Parliamentary delegation when it met the Indian Prime Minister, V.P. Singh in Delhi who had also welcomed the proposal. The aim of Colombo was to prevent the spillover into Tamil Nadu of Tamil refugees from the war-torn north-east of the island. Already an estimated 50,000 refugees had fled to south India since fighting broke out between government forces and the LTTE on June 11. 'We are trying to set it up in Mannar Island since this is where most refugees go before trying to get into India', said a senior official involved in planning the exercise.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi also had urged the Indian Prime Minister to persuade the Sri Lankan government to organise refugee camps in northern Sri Lanka itself with assistance from the UNHCR. In his letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. Karunanidhi recalled the Prime Minister's statement at a press conference on July 20 indicating that he was exploring the possibility of asking Colombo to set up camps in the island itself. 'I will be grateful if you can immediately initiate action on this suggestion and let me know', the Chief Minister had said. He also expressed 'grave concern' over the continuing influx of refugees into Tamil Nadu. 'My visit to refugee camps show that the refugees are not only from poor families but also from the middle and affluent strata', the CM added.

The Sri Lankan idea is to convert the whole of Mannar Island into one big refugee centre, but this would first involve ensuring that both the government and the LTTE respect the island as a non-combatant zone. The ICRC's experience could be used in making Mannar a non-combatant area, while the UNHCR which already has projects in the North-East could deal with refugee relief.

Observers note a political motivation behind the government's move. Sri Lanka wants to keep India as distant as possible from the Sri Lankan conflict, and Colombo sees the influx of Tamil refugees into Tamil Nadu as providing a perpetual cause for India 'expressing continued concern' in respect of matters which Colombo regards as 'essentially internal'.

While the refugees already in India have expressed total opposition to the idea, the LTTE itself has turned down the call to help in converting the Mannar Island into a demilitarised zone to accommodate Tamil refugees. The LTTE has flatly refused the idea that it moves out of the island completely.

As for the refugees already in Tamil Nadu, they are not prepared to return until hostilities cease in Sri Lanka.

DEMILITARISED ZONE IN JAFFNA PROPOSED

The government has proposed a demilitarised zone in the area of the Jaffna Fort with the sole intention of re-opening the Jaffna General Hospital and protecting it from being affected in the cross-fire between government forces and the LTTE, Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Amaratunga told a press conference on 2 August. He said that many representations had been made to re-open the Jaffna Hospital and the GMOA had written in to say that all doctors there were safe and were prepared to work.

Mr. Amaratunga said that the fol-

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lowing basic guidelines would have to be adhered to within the DMZ:

a. No new camps, bunkers, checkpoints or any type of military installation should be established and such existing installations should be removed from within the DMZ and occupied buildings vacated.

b. Carrying of weapons is not permitted.

c. All weapons, explosives and warlike materials held in DMZ should be removed.

d. Radio Communication systems and allied installations should be removed.

e. Transport of weapons, explosives and any other warlike material and equipment will not be permitted in any vehicle or vessel.

f. Any type of weapon will not be fired within or into the DMZ.

g. Aircraft flying over the DMZ and heli-movements within the DMZ, particularly into the Fort, should not be interfered with.

h. Sri Lanka naval vessels and craft that move along the channel should not be interfered with.

j. On the seafront, no vessel within a radius of five miles from the Fort should be interfered with. This is being done expressly to permit fishermen the freedom of movement.

The Minister said that negotiations were continuing with the LTTE through the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and that the government was awaiting the response from the LTTE. Asked as to why the government had previously rejected the LTTE's proposal for demilitarisation, the Minister said that what the LTTE suggested was to have only the hospital demilitarised. That was not acceptable. 'We cannot demilitarise only the hospital premises. Anybody can fire from the front or behind or inside the hospital. What will happen when we retaliate?', the Minister asked.

LTTE Seeks Indian 'Recognition & Support'

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has appealed to the Government of India to recognise their organisation and intervene directly in the current conflict between the Tigers and the Sri Lankan Government.

This was disclosed by one of the militant group's leaders and former Jaffna Commander of the LTTE, Major General Kittu alias Sathasivam Krishnakumar. Speaking to India Abroad, the Tiger leader said that India should recognise the LTTE immediately.

'India must get involved. If it does not, other forces will intervene. Already there are other foreign involvements detrimental to India's security interests. Recently, a Pakistani warship was in Colombo. Chinese arms are being supplied to Sri Lankan forces. A monitoring station under cover of an American broadcasting station is still active'.

However, India said that no Pakistani warship had visited Sri Lanka and that a coast guard ship had called at Colombo on its way to Karachi from China.

Kittu added that the LTTE had requested Mr. M. Karunanidhi, Chief Minister of the southern state of Tamil Nadu to explain the 'foreign involvements' to the Indian Prime Minister when he meets Mr. V.P. Singh this week in New Delhi. 'The rest is for them to understand', Kittu said.

'When we were fighting the Indian Army we told them clearly that we loved the people of India and that we were their friends. Now India must support us morally', said Kittu.

Answering a question, he said that there had been no reply from the central government. 'But the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister is receiving refugees and making arrangements for them. That is also a message', he claimed.

He said that India had recognised the African National Congress, and that the LTTE should likewise be recognised as it was a group fighting for 'oppressed people'.

Kittu said that the Tigers were blamed unfairly for the murders in Madras of the EPRLF leaders. He ruled out talks with the Government, saying that more than 3000 Tamils had died since the outbreak of fighting on June 11th.

'We shall win the war because we are fighting for justice. Otherwise we couldn't have fought the fourth largest army in the world', Kittu argued.

ENVOY TOLD NOT TO MEET LTTE LEADER

Express News Service

New Delhi, Aug. 6: The Indian High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, Mr. Kuldip Nayar, has been advised 'not to meet LTTE leader Kittu alias Krisha Kumar'.

The direction was given to Mr. Kuldip Nayar in response to a query by the Indian High Commissioner whether he could receive Mr. Kittu and discuss with him the Sri Lankan Tamil issue. Mr. Kittu had contacted the Indian High Commissioner for a one-to-one meeting to discuss the present clashes in the North-Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. It was an attempt to open a line of communication with the Government of India. Mr. Kuldip Nayar sent a message to New Delhi and sought political clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs. After examining the pros and cons of the request by Mr. Kittu, the Foreign Office said 'no' to Mr. Nayar.

There has been no direct (official) contact between the LTTE and the Government of India or the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi since April 1990. However, Mr. Kittu has also been in telephonic contact with Mr. Karunanidhi. The External Affairs Ministry which formulates the foreign policy does not want to 'encourage the establishment of contacts with any of the Tamil groups, at this stage'. The sources say that the Foreign Office would like to maintain a studied silence on the Sri Lankan Tamil issue.

However, India has decided to despatch medicines, including life-saving drugs and other medical supplies to Jaffna on humanitarian grounds. This decision has been taken at the highest political level.

Despatches of essential medicines would start moving at the earliest, said a highly-placed source.

Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh has expressed his deep concern over the heavy casualties suffered by the Tamil population in the North-Eastern province of Sri Lanka.

At a review meeting with officials on August 4 immediately after a meeting with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi, Mr. Singh was understood to have given his consent to the gesture of sending life-saving drugs. The actual modalities of the despatch are being worked out at the officials level.

Officials are tightlipped on the question of whether a medical team as such would be despatched. The reply was: 'Please wait and see. India cannot be a silent spectator of continued clashes and heavy casualties in a neighbouring country'.

Muslims Massacred in Mosques

At least 120 Muslims were killed and over 75 seriously wounded in raids on two mosques on 3 August at Kattankudy in eastern Sri Lanka. The victims included children and old men who were engaged in evening prayers when they were massacred by armed gunmen who stormed two mosques at about 8.15 pm.

Soon after the killings, the government, the security forces and the opposition political parties including other Tamil groups accused the LTTE of the slaughter. Denying any responsibility, the LTTE blamed the security forces and its rival Tamil groups for the killings. The Batticaloa LTTE leader Karikalan was reported to have said, 'This has been done by the Red Movement 90, a splinter group of the Tamil National Army to discredit the LTTE'. A statement issued by the LTTE's London office said that the killings were the result of a 'carefully designed diabolical plan in order to get

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financial and military assistance from the Arab world. The massacre of innocent Muslim civilians was neatly orchestrated and the blame was put on the Liberation Tigers'. But the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader, A.H.M. Ashraff, was categorical in his accusation against the LTTE which, he charged, was bent on seeking to destroy the political and religious identity of the Muslims.

The two mosques, the Meera Jumma mosque and the Hussainiya mosque were located in close proximity to each other, only a quarter of a kilometer separating them. The gunmen numbering about 30, armed with automatic weapons and grenades had arrived in two vehicles and burst into the mosques simultaneously after forming into two squads. After mowing down the praying Muslims in their kneeling positions, the assailants had lobbed grenades into the screaming crowd. Some of the victims had been hacked to death. The gunmen, some of whom had been attired in military-type fatigues and black uniforms, had regrouped and presumably escaped by boat leaving behind the two vehicles they arrived in.

Opposition condemns: Many opposition parties met in emergency sessions and condemned 'unreservedly the uncivilised and barbaric rampage by the LTTE on the Muslims of Kattankudy on August 3 which claimed nearly 140 lives and wounded more than 100 while they were offering their congregational prayers at two mosques'.

The statement issued by the TULF, SLMP, SLFP, MULF. ENDLF, EPDP, EPRLF, NSSP, TELO, CPSL, MEP, SLPF and the Liberal Party added: 'From the beginning of this war between the LTTE and the security forces thousands of innocent Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese lives have been lost. The intransigent attitude of the LTTE and its insistence in refusing to recognise other democratic forces has resulted in the Northern and Eastern provinces becoming a battle-ground wherein innocent civilians have been subjected to misery and misfortune. While condemning all killings of Muslims and Sinhalese civilians by the LTTE we are also equally concerned by the killings of innocent Tamils recently and condemn all those who are responsible for it.

'The cause for the present plight of civilians in the Northern and Eastern provinces is the government's total failure to protect the interests of democratic forces. In the circumstances we state that the government should hold themselves responsible to provide equal and adequate security to all communities in the North and East'.

BALASINGHAM SEEKS INDIAN INTERVENTION

From S. Venkat Narayan

NEW DELHI, August 6 – For the third time in less than two months the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have sought India's 'diplomatic intervention' in Sri Lanka.

The latest request for India's diplomatic intervention comes from Anton Balasingham, political adviser to the boss of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Talking to a group of reporters in Jaffna over the weekend, Mr. Balasingham said all that the LTTE wants is 'the moral support of the government of India'.

New Delhi should take 'diplomatic initiatives' to prevent 'the continuous genocide of our people' he pleaded.

However, Mr. Balasingham has rejected the possibility of military intervention either by India or any other international peace keeping force.

He complained that India has merely expressed its concern but has not condemned 'the large-scale killing and massacre of Tamil people'.

The LTTE theoretician did not spell out precisely what form the Indian 'intervention' should be. He merely said: 'I think India can play a role diplomatically because, whether Sri Lanka likes it or not, it (Sri Lanka) is of strategic importance to India'.

Asked about Mr. Premadasa's proposal for 'international mediation', Mr. Balasingham said: 'The LTTE would be opposed to any form of international military intervention, such as a United Nations Peace-Keeping Force. The Tigers are opposed to any international effort that will circumvent India'.

Commenting on the course of the seven-week war so far, Mr. Balasingham said that while the LTTE has moved out of towns in the East, the Northern Province was still under its control, and that the Sri Lanka Army has been finding it 'extremely difficult' to move forward.

'All the important Army camps in the North are under siege and we have stopped their mobility and their food supplies', Mr. Balasingham claimed.

Responding to a question about the possibility of a political solution, he said: 'We are prepared to negotiate for more regional autonomy if Sri Lanka proposes a federal system. He rejected Colombo's condition that LTTE first lay down arms before beginning fresh talks as 'totally unacceptable'.

EPDP Recalls PFLT Leader's Statement

After all attempts to solicit international aid and sympathy for the attempts of the LTTE to establish fascist authority had failed, they are making frantic public appeals that India should now intervene. India can never forget the statement of Mahataya, the present Leader of the PFLT (People's Liberation Front of Liberation Tigers) that 'The Sinhala and Tamil people are the sons of this soil, their problems can be solved by negotiations amongst them, India need not interfere in our internal problems.

Making use of foreign and local contact and relationship for their narrow fascist motives, stabbing in the back, deception of being friendly will not continue to serve any purpose, states a Press release by the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP).

The release adds: 'The LTTE is adamant in continuing the war unleashed by them for the establishment of a fascist hegemony.

'The LTTE is hellbent on extorting two sovereigns of gold from every household in the North. Failing to obtain the gold they are demanding a youth from every household for their wicked and evil army, from the people who have been forced to lose contact with their dear kith and kin and face untold hardships consequent to being reduced to the state of refugees.

'The LTTE which is involved in conscription much against the wishes of the Tamil-speaking people is forcing the future generation of Tamils to fall prey to the war designs of the fascist LTTE and has driven the Tamils to the brim of frustration.

'The barrels of the guns of the LTTE which have been directed against the ordinary Sinhala, Muslim and Tamil people contrary to the norms of human civilisation, wishes and aspirations of the people, are attempting to build fascist authority on the very ruins.

According to the proposals made there should be no referendum as the merger of the two provinces should automatically be made permanent. The Muslims would have autonomous rule with Amparai as their base and they would also have their own law and order machinery. They would also be able to preserve their identity and culture by the autonomy given to them. The Sinhalese in both provinces would be treated equally and will share all facilities and privileges with the others.

Political sources said that the six parties were now having consultations with the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) in an attempt to convince it and seek its support to have the recommendations implemented. The parties which also met Opposition Leader, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike would seek another meeting with her after matters were finalised with the SLMC.

Two matters which were yet to be finalised were the unit of devolution

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POLITICS TAKES BACK SEAT AS WAR ENTERS THIRD MONTH

Rita Sebastian From Colombo

Black Friday August 3. 140 Muslims are brutally gunned down as they kneel for Insha (night) prayers in two mosques in the coastal village of Eastern Kattankudy. Two days later 49 Tamils meet with the same fate in neighbouring Kalmunai. August 12. 122 Muslims are hacked with swords and knives in Eravur. Hours later men armed with knives storm a Tamil refugee camp in Weeramunai in the Amparai district and massacre over 40 Tamils.

Communal tensions simmering under the surface had reared its ugly head with devastating consequences. The massacre of Muslims was laid at the door of the Tigers. Nobody was quibbling about it. Whether it was the UNP, the main opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Muslim leadership or the Tamil groups, they were all agreed that it was part of a planned strategy by the Tigers to trigger communal violence in the island. Two reasons were attributed for it. One was to force the government to order troops back from the north to protect the border areas and Muslim villages, thereby depleting its strength in the northern areas. And secondly to internationalise the killing of Tamils and give credence to the genocide theory.

The Tigers however have denied the massacre of Muslims and charged the Colombo Government of a diabolical plan to drive a wedge between the Tamils and the Muslims and enlist Arab assistance, in its military onslaught against them.

A divided Muslim political leadership found common cause and came together on one platform not only to condemn the several killings of members of their community but also to demand that the government provide adequate protection to vulnerable Muslim villages in the eastern province.

Sri Lanka Muslim Congress President, H.M. Ashraff angered at what he described as the government's foot-dragging on the security issue threatened to declare a Jihad (holy war) that would engulf the whole country in flames.

The demand to arm Muslim youth to protect their villages was met with a firm refusal by State Minister for Defence, Ranjan Wijeratne. 'I am not going to bring back gun culture into the country' he told Parliament. Equally unhappy about arming civilians is the Tamil United Liberation Front who feel it would easily lead to gang warfare with each group trying to destroy the other.

The TULF as an alternative to arming civilians has suggested the declaring of demilitarised zones around civilian enclaves in the North-East region with the International Committee of the Red Cross as guarantors.

Whether its suggestion is acceptable or not the return of TULF President M. Sivasithamparam and politburo member R. Sambandan from Madras this week to participate in the All Party Conference discussing the scheme of devolution to Provincial Councils heralds a new phase in TULF politics.

Both men who were actively involved in discussions on devolution of powers in the years 1983-1987 and played a key role in shaping the Thirteenth Amendment could well propel the party back into the forefront of Tamil politics in the country.

The moderate TULF has somehow distanced itself from five other Tamil parties, The Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), The Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF), The People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and the Eelam People's Democratic Front (EPDP) who together have been trying to forge a consensus on Tamil demands.

With the thirteen members of The Eelavar Democratic front bowing out of Parliament, and the LTTE battling government forces in the North-East, there seems little likelihood at present of any Tamil political activity, except for articulating Tamil grievances in Colombo. The TULF stands firm on its basic demand that parties to the conflict must cease hostilities and reengage in a dialogue to resolve the Tamil question.

Between 1983 and 1987, with the Sixth Amendment that required swearing allegiance to the unitary concept of the constitution on the statute book, there was no Tamil representation in Parliament, District Councils or local bodies. The Tamils more or less ceased to be part of the politics of Sri Lanka and seemed alienated and excluded from political decision making at national or local government level. Many attributed this to the rise of Tamil militancy and the marginalisation of democratic and moderate Tamil opinion. Recent developments have raised serious concern as to whether these events are likely to replay themselves.

The EDF, a close ally of the Tigers was in one sense able to articulate within the legislative forum some of the political concerns of the LTTE while maintaining a certain independence to act as an intermediary between the LTTE and political forces in the south. The EDF decision to quit Parliament therefore represents a setback to the process of national reconciliation and the attempts to bring the LTTE into the political mainstream.

With the 'war' now into its third month and with no signs of any headway being made to call a halt to hostilities a number of concerned international non-governmental agencies are working behind the scenes to open lines of communication between the Government and the Tigers. India which was adamant at the initial stages about not involving the international community on the premise that if any outside mediation was necessary it should be India that should be called in, has suddenly changed its mind and given the go ahead. On the ground the apparent scaling down in the intensity of the fighting has in no way reduced the number of casualties, on all sides. Neither has it called a halt to the influx of refugees to Tamil Nadu.

Mannar Island has become the transit camp for Tamils fleeing the war-torn North-East. Boatmen who know the exact schedules of the Sri Lankan Navy patrols keep watch and manoeuvre their craft across the narrow stretch of waterway to the Indian coast. Although intense negotiations have been on with the Tigers through the International Committee of the Red Cross to turn Mannar Island into a mass refugee camp and declare it a demilitarised zone to accommodate the refugees who have fled to India as well as other Tamil refugees fleeing conflict areas in the North-East, the Tigers have refused the request. They have also refused the Government proposal for a demilitarised zone in the Jaffna Fort area inclusive of the Jaffna Hospital complex. The Tigers have sent in a counter proposal of declaring only the hospital complex a demilitarised zone.

The North-East conflict has quite understandably thrown up new demands. SLMC's Ashraff is demanding community oriented devolution of power as a safeguard for the Muslims. Power devolved on some form of formal structure for the Muslims by joining together Muslim majority areas. It does not have to be a contiguous area he says and can be patterned on the Indian Pondicherry model, with Amparai where the Muslim areas are contiguous as the base, administratively linked up with other Muslim dominated areas in the region.

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and the position of the Muslims with regard to the quantum of autonomy. The details of these two vital matters were still being worked out.

A summary of the proposals made is expected to be placed before the President at the All Party Conference (APC) which is scheduled to reconvene on the 13th August. The proposed Regional Council, according to the recommendations, should have powers over, among others, law and order machinery, colonisation, land and land settlement. It should function as an autonomous body.

The leader of one of the parties in the Group said that if their recommendations were accepted by the President, the LTTE would lose the basis of its struggle. The question of 'Eelam' (a separate state) would not arise. With a solution found with the consent of the six leading Tamil political parties in the country, Eelam would become redundant. The LTTE struggle will then no longer have popular support either here or abroad.

EDF MPs QUIT

Colombo, July 23: The 11 Eelavar Democratic Front members of parliament have resigned.

The EDF MPs who had boycotted parliament these last weeks in protest against military operations in the north-east – which, they charged had led to many civilian casualties and had rendered thousands refugees – said in a statement today that 'they could no longer remain dormant spectators to the torment of the Tamil-speaking people'.

EDF General Secretary Balakumar charged that the 'communal attitude of the government had not changed since 1983, and that the actions of the government and its forces made it clear that requests made through the democratic process had become meaningless'.

The statement further added that when the EDF MPs entered parliament they had been given an assurance by President Premadasa that a solution to the ethnic question would be found politically, and that no military action would be taken against the Tamil-speaking people. Balakumar also charged the government with taking steps to 'suppress the Tamil-speaking people and of trying to rouse the hatred of the majority in the name of national defence.

'The propaganda made in favour of the forces is a threat to the Tamil-speaking people', he added.

Terming all the exhortations for national unity as mere 'eyewash', Balakumar accused the government of 'becoming captive to the forces of chauvinism'.

Govt. Rejects LTTE Offer

The government has rejected a proposal by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to declare a ceasefire in the Jaffna Peninsula and re-open the Jaffna hospital. The *Tigers* in their proposal channelled through the ICRC a few days back had also wanted the peninsula declared a 'de-militarised zone'. The government said 'Nothing doing. We didn't even want to discuss it. The LTTE laid down conditions when the ICRC sought their consent to visit the besieged Jaffna Fort military camp. The ICRC was prepared to do it, but the *Tigers* set out conditions', Plantation Industries Minister and State Minister for Defence, Ranjan Wijeratne disclosed last week.

Addressing the weekly Cabinet news briefing at the Cabinet office, the Minister said that troops were continuing their onslaught against the LTTE in the North-East. It was possible to land 1000 security personnel at Elephant Pass and despite stiff resistance from the *Tigers* troops had fought their way to Kilinochchi. There was heavy resistance at Paranthan, but that was overcome and the soldiers continued their advance. Mannar and Vavuniya were also firmly established by troops. The LTTE was on the run, but there seemed to be some brave fighters facing upto the security onslaught. It was only a matter of time to clear up the mainland upto Elephant Pass.

Mr. Wijeratne explained that a few persons were killed during a skirmish at Thampalagamam, but the forces were continuing to clear the Trincomalee district. At Medawachchiya, the LTTE had raided a remote jungle hamlet and killed 20 Sinhalese villagers and burnt their houses last week LTTE cadres now in desperate straits were trying to kill Sinhalese peasant and run into the jungles where they knew they themselves would be cornered and killed by the forces.

EDF/EROS – Bid To End Impasse

Two former Members of Parliament of the Eelavar Democratic Front (EDF), political wing of EROS, have left for Jaffna for urgent consultations with their leader, Velupillai Balakumar to determine the political future of the party amidst reports that scores of EDF activists were making a bid to flee the country, political sources said yesterday.

All EDF MPs resigned their seats last month for what they termed 'personal reasons', but apparently viewed by political observers as a move motivated by the Tigers to protest against the on-going offensive on the LTTE in the North-East.

Ex-EDF MPs, Edward Sebestianpillai and K. Selvanayagam set off for the North by ship with the approval of the government for talks with their leader to end the impasse faced by the party.

Confirming the mission to the North, former EDF MP, M. Ramalingam said yesterday that the purpose of the visit was for urgent consultations with leader Velupillai Balakumar regarding the future position of the party. 'We want to find out what we are expected to do and determine our future political programme', he added.

Mr. Ramalingam explained that the EDF was in no hurry to nominate new members to Parliament. The conflict in the North-East should be resolved through political means and further loss of life and property prevented.

The former MP said that a number of EDF members were trying to leave the country and applications had been made to several embassies in Colombo in that regard. Some of them who were trapped in Trincomalee and Batticaloa have also found their way to Colombo.

Mr. Ramalingam charged that an appeal to the government to ensure the safe evacuation of EROS members and activists from particularly the East had not produced any results and ultimately some of them had managed to find their way to Colombo amidst a lot of difficulties. He said that the resignation of the EDF Members of Parliament was a decision of the party leadership. That was a clear cut decision, he said.

Asked why scores of EDF members were trying to leave the country, he replied, 'They are going for various reasons'.

LTTE RELEASE 15 POLICEMEN

The International Committee of the Red Cross delegation in Sri Lanka yesterday announced the release of 15 police constables who had been held by the LTTE.

The LTTE released the policemen to ICRC officials in Jaffna on August 1 and they were brought by ship to Trincomalee and handed over to the police authorities there yesterday, according to an ICRC press communique.

Police sources in Colombo said that the released policemen were all reserve police constables who had been attached to the Kilinochchi police station. They had been captured by the Liberation Tigers when the Kilinochchi police station was attacked on June 6.

The sources said that the released personnel were all either Muslim or Tamil and that no Sinhalese were among those released.

ICRC officials had visited the cap-

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FROM THE WAR FRONT

● **FIVE MUSLIMS,** alleged by the LTTE to be 'informants' were shot and killed on 28 July in the Al Jahaiya mosque at Sammanthurai in eastern Sri Lanka. Five policemen were killed in an LTTE ambush at Muttur. Security sources claimed that government forces had killed 16 Tigers in two separate encounters on the Vavuniya-Mankulam road and at Talaimannar. At Kattaprichchan in the east, ten soldiers and four policemen were shot dead in a Tiger ambush and one escaped with serious injuries. All arms and ammunition belonging to the dead men were removed by the LTTE.

● **TWENTY THOUSAND** metric tons of cement will be imported in September by the Sri Lanka Cement Corporation to ease the prevailing acute shortage. The closure of the Galle and Kankesanthurai cement factories has created a severe crisis in the production of cement.

● **PRIVATE SECRETARY** to former Cabinet Minister Gamini Dissanayake, P.M.G. Piyasiri was shot and seriously injured on 28 July by a suspected JVP armed gang.

● **SRI LANKA MUSLIM CONGRESS** leader M.H.M. Ashraff, after meeting President Premadasa, said that the President had given an assurance that the security authorities would be directed to formulate a security plan for the Muslims in the districts of Amparai, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and the Wanni; and the question of recruiting and deploying Muslim Home Guards in the villages and along the borders would also be gone into and appropriate action initiated. There were nearly 200,000 Muslim refugees at Thoppur, Kinniya and Muttur in the Trincomalee district and in the districts of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Puttalam.

● **FORTY-EIGHT THOUSAND** Tamil refugees from north-east Sri Lanka arrived in South India during the previous month, and nearly 200 refugees made the crossing of the Palk Straits every day, the All India Radio reported on 30 July.

● **GOVERNMENT** sources claimed that on 29 July the Airforce succeeded in airdropping 21 food parcels into the Jaffna Fort which had been under siege by the LTTE. As the LTTE resumed its mortar attack on the Fort, the airforce continued with aerial bombardment of the areas in the vicinity of the Fort destroying many buildings. As the Tigers mounted a sustained mortar and machine gunfire attack on the Mullaitivu army camp, government forces retaliated with aerial strafing and bombing of the areas causing heavy damage and many casualties. The Kilinochchi army camp in the north has been abandoned by the armed forces.

● **SIX MUSLIMS** were abducted on 29 July by an unidentified gang from Udugampola in the Medawachchiya area while they were returning from the bazaar.

● **FOURTEEN MUSLIMS,** some traders and others farmers, while returning home were killed in Akkaraipattu on 30 July. The victims had been abducted by the assailants, their hands tied behind their backs with their own clothes, lined up and shot dead. An armed gang raided the Koviladdi village and attacked villagers with axes and knives killing 9 Tamils and a Muslim.

● **TWO POLICEMEN** trapped in the besieged Jaffna Fort were killed and three others injured when the Tigers launched a mortar and gunfire attack on the fort. The dead policemen were identified as Abdul Jabbar and Gnanakumar. The dead policemen were buried within the premises of the Fort.

● **THE EELAM NATIONAL** Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) in condemning the appointment of two separate DIGs (Deputy Inspector Generals of Police) for the north-east province stated that the ENDLF also opposed the delinking of the villages of Sinnawatte, Medawatte, Puludunawa, Gemunupura, Kosgolla, Niaguna, Wangamuwa, Digavapi I and Digavapi II from the Batticaloa district and linking them with the Amparai district. Such actions by the government would show that it is not prepared to recognise the north-east province as traditional homeland of the Tamil-speaking people.

● **AN ARMY LIEUTENANT** and four soldiers were killed in a Tiger ambush at Uyilankulam in the Mannar district on 31 July. Following this incident, units of the combined armed forces mounted intensified military operations against alleged Tiger positions in Mannar. The operations included aerial strafing and bombing resulting in damage to buildings and civilian casualties. Security sources claimed that a number of Tigers were killed and six bunkers were destroyed at Thiruketheeshwaram.

● **FIFTEEN** smouldering bodies of men were seen on the Dunuwilaaa-Akurana road in Alawathugoda in the Kandy district on 31 July.

● **THE ENDLF,** in condemning the government's decision to recruit 50,000 homeguards as a threat to the Tamil people, stated in a press statement that the LTTE had brought shame on the Tamil community and the militant movement by the killing of innocent civilian Sinhalese and Muslims.

● **GENERAL SECRETARY** of the People's Front of Liberation Tigers, Yogaratnam Yogi, in an interview, had stated that the present war is a 'war to a finish until a separate state of Eelam is achieved'. He accused the Sri Lankan government of being insincere during negotiations. 'Right from the beginning, the government was insincere. We trusted the President, but he did not prove himself to be sincere'.

● SEVEN MUSLIMS were abducted at gunpoint as they were returning from their paddy fields by armed men at Kodawatta Vayal, a few miles off Sammanthurai on 2 August. In another incident, two bodies of Muslims identified as father and son were shot dead at Majidpuram in the same area. Since the outbreak of armed hostilities between government forces and the LTTE, over 300 Muslims had been killed in the eastern province alone, according to the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress.

● **GOVERNMENT SOURCES** claimed that the Sri Lankan Navy intercepted a boat on 2 August at Veddithalithivu off the coast of Mannar and arrested six Tigers. Two of the arrested are reported to be 'important LTTE men'. One soldier was killed and three were wounded in a Tiger ambush when soldiers belonging to the Gajaba regiment were engaged in search operations between Kilinochchi and Elephant Pass in the north.

● **THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT** has donated a consignment of urgently needed medicines, drugs and medical items worth over 3.4 million rupees to Sri Lanka. These were supplied through UNICEF for use among the civilians affected by the current conflict in the north-east. It is reported that the Ministry of Health with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross and other NGOs will distribute the medicines and drugs to medical institutions in the affected areas.

● **THE BRIDGE** on the Ottamawadi-Kiran highway in the east was comprehensively destroyed on 3 August by the LTTE. Security sources claimed that 9 Tigers including a leader were killed in an ambush by government forces at Palampattar in the Trincomalee district.

● **THE CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION** in Colombo has donated Rs.1,710,000 to the Central Council of Social Services, an umbrella organisation comprising 118 affiliate NGOs, to support emergency assistance in the form of dry rations, medicines, clothing and to cover transport costs primarily for the benefit of displaced persons in the Mannar district. This latest contribution brings the total Canadian assistance committed to the current emergency to Rs.27,299.465.

● **AN ARMY** clearing unit was ambushed by the LTTE on 4 August near Borupola on the Amparai-Kandy Road, killing one soldier and seriously injuring another. Following the ambush, the army cordoned off the area and launched an extensive search operation.

● **A MAJOR ATTEMPT** by the LTTE to break into the besieged Jaffna Fort on 5 August with nearly a dozen armour-plated heavy vehicles modified for the purpose was thwarted by government forces with massive aerial strafing and bombing. Claims by the security forces that the LTTE lost dozens of their men in this rather daring endeavour was confirmed by Tiger circles. A large contingent of Tigers walking behind armour-plated heavy vehicles approached the Fort while they fired mortars and rocket propelled grenades at the camp. As the soldiers and policemen retaliated with heavy artillery, Italian built SF 260 Sia Marchetti ground attack aircraft and American Bell 412 and 212 helicopter gunships bombed and strafed relentlessly until the Tiger attack was repulsed. As the Tigers withdrew, many bodies were seen strewn along the approach road to the Fort.

● **THE NATIONAL DEFENCE FUND** commenced by the government following the outbreak of the Govt.-LTTE war has topped Rs.120 million and according to President Premadasa, the target of the Fund is Rs.5000 million.

● **AT LEAST** 58 Muslims were shot and hacked to death by armed gangs in separate incidents at Akkaraipattu in eastern Sri Lanka on 5 August. In the first attack, 18 Muslim farmers were killed at Palamukulam in the Attalachenai area. The victims had been returning from their fields when the assailants surrounded them, tied their hands behind their backs and shot them through their heads after lining them up. In another attack at Panayaruppu junction on the Akkaraipattu-Amparai Road, 15 Muslims were killed when the assailants opened fire with automatic weapons. The Treasurer of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress alleged that

about 21 Muslims had been abducted in the Akkaraipattu area and their whereabouts were not known, by a gang, allegedly belonging to the LTTE. Later 18 bodies with gunshot injuries were found at Alindakadu. The SLMC also alleged that the LTTE had issued 'quit notices' to Muslims living in the Akkaraipattu area to evacuate by 10 August.

Newspaper offices in Colombo received telephone calls on 6 August from a person allegedly belonging to an extremist Muslim organisation who stated that the group's 'Hisbullah' office in Tehran and Lebanon had been informed to bomb the LTTE offices based in London, USA and other western capitals in retaliation for the killing of Muslims in Sri Lanka allegedly by the LTTE.

● **THREE SOLDIERS** of the Second Sinha Regiment were severely wounded when they trod on a pressure-mine while engaged in clearing operations on the Mannar-Vavuniya road on 5 August.

● **OVER 100 MUSLIMS** in Colombo apparently provoked after watching the bodies of those killed in Kattankudy mosques over the Rupavahini (TV) news bulletin on 5 August marched towards the Hindu Kovil at Bandaranaike Mawatte in Kotahena and made an attempt to attack it. Police who rushed to the scene used tear gas and opened fire forcing the angry crowd to disperse. But the gang had already attacked a father and son living behind the temple. The incident prompted the police to provide guard to the Kovil while police stations in other areas were alerted following the incident and security was strengthened around Kovils and Mosques.

● **ALL MUSLIM** traders in Akkaraipattu, Kalmunai and Sammanthurai kept the shops closed on 6 and 7 August in protest against the killing of 58 Muslims in Akkaraipattu on 5 August. White flags were hoisted in some shops as a mark of respect for the dead.

● **SECURITY SOURCES** claimed that 13 Tigers were killed in separate operations in the Akkaraipattu and Pahalamunai areas on 6 August; on the same day 21 Tigers were shot dead near the Palaly and Karainagar army camps.

● **'WE WILL NOT** capture the LTTE, but destroy them. We will show no mercy. The LTTE does not deserve to live in this country or anywhere for that matter. There should not be ceasefires. We will go all out and destroy everyone of them, up to their last man. Nowhere in the world had any terrorist group killed people inside a mosque, kovil, church, temple or any place of religious worship. The LTTE brutes had gone into a mosque at Kattankudy and gunned down innocent Muslims', Plantations Industries Minister and State Minister for Defence, Ranjan Wijeratne said in Parliament on 7 August.

● **IN A DAWN RAID** on 7 August by the Special Task Force on an LTTE hideout in Sangamankanda between Thirukoil and Komari in east Sri Lanka, government sources claimed that six Tigers were killed and a large quantity of weapons and ammunition were captured.

● **57 SINHALESE,** including twenty women and children, were shot and hacked to death in two separate attacks in east Sri Lanka on 7 and 8 August. In the first attack on 7 August, 32 Sinhalese were hacked to death in the remote village of Bandaraduwa in Uhana police area in the Amparai district. Four were critically injured and admitted to hospital. The attackers had entered the village clad in uniforms similar to those worn by the army and attacked the inmates with knives. A 27-year-old survivor of this attack, Mrs. K. Karunawathie, speaking from her hospital bed is reported to have said that when the men in camouflaged uniforms entered their house, she fell at their feet and pleaded with them to spare their lives, but they killed her husband and children in her presence and thereafter cut her also. She fell unconscious and when she regained consciousness, she found herself in hospital. On 8 August on the Mahadivulwewa-Rotawewa road, a gang of 40 armed men bombed a private bus on its way from Morawewa to Horawapotana before dragging the people out and shooting them at point blank range as the victims tried to escape into the jungle. 25 persons, including 14 women, one child and an off-duty soldier, were killed in the incident. Seven persons with knife and gunshot injuries were rushed to the hospital. The government blamed the LTTE for these killings.

● **ABOUT 150** foreign passport holders stranded in the northern Jaffna peninsula since the fighting broke out on June 11 were transported to Colombo by ship on 7 August. The evacuees included Britains, Australians, Germans, Americans and many Tamils who had returned to Jaffna to see their relatives.

● **MINISTER WIJERATNE** told a press conference on 9 August that LTTE cadres had killed seven Sinhalese and four others were injured in the village of Nawgamuwa in the Vavuniya area on 8 August.

● **THE LANKAN AIRFORCE** launched a massive sustained bombing and strafing operation in the Jaffna city on 9 August. Security sources claimed that the operations were carried out in an attempt to destroy LTTE bunkers situated about 700 metres away from the Jaffna Fort from which the LTTE had been firing rockets and mortars at the Fort army camp. Heavy exchange of mortar and small arms fire between government forces and the LTTE took place on 10 August at Talaimannar.

● **S. PREMACHANDRAN, EPRLF (TULF) MP** for Jaffna district speaking in Parliament on 10 August condemned the killing of innocent Muslim and Sinhalese civilians in the eastern province. During the past few months, more than 1500 innocent Tamils had been killed and some burnt alive. Muslims and Sinhalese were being killed by the LTTE, but who were killing the Tamils? They were planned murders and little publicity was given when Tamils were killed, the MP said. Mavai S. Senathirajah (TULF National List MP) said that over 2500 people had been killed in the north-east and the people could not endure the suffering much longer. Every newspaper reported murders of Muslims and Sinhalese. In one incident the army had escorted men and women of the area to the Trincomalee esplanade and many of them had been killed, but the papers did not report these killings. In Akkaraipattu 37 Tamils were arrested and had later been killed, but these killings were not reported. Many forces are working to create division between the Tamils and Muslims in the eastern province, the MP added.

● **PRESIDENT PREMADASA,** speaking at a public meeting at Amparai on 31 July said that it was now clear that the LTTE had been preparing for war while continuing its dialogue with the government. During his talks with the LTTE, he had told them that the government would not allow any group that retained arms and ammunition and maintained a guerrilla outfit to contest the North-East Council elections. It was stressed that all arms should be surrendered and a climate for free and independent political activity be created to hold the elections. All parties interested in contesting the elections should be free to do so without fear. One group could not be allowed to contest the polls carrying arms while the others had to face the elections as ordinary citizens. With the dissolution of the North-East Provincial Council and if fresh elections were called, the LTTE knew that they would have to surrender their arms as they had pledged earlier. Frightened of that prospect, they made use of minor incidents in a refugee camp to wage war against the government.

● **A LARGE NUMBER** of Tamil and Muslim students from the Jaffna and Batticaloa universities have sought permission from the University Grants Commission to continue their academic activities in other universities in the south of the island. The Chairman of the University Grants Commission, Prof. Arjuan Aluvihare said that students whose lives were at risk because of the security situation should be provided with alternative suitable arrangements irrespective of their ethnic group.

● **OVER A THOUSAND** Sinhala and Muslim youth in the Eastern Province are to be given military training beginning shortly. Most of the youth to be given training are from the Amparai and Akkaraipattu areas. The Commander of the Home Guards, SSP Sumith Liyanage said that he was prepared to give the training to all selected applicants. Among other things, the youth will be given training in the use of firearms.

● **AN ESTIMATED** 85 Tamil villagers were hacked to death in eastern Sri Lanka at the beginning of August in apparent retaliation for the killings of hundreds of Muslims, residents said. About 100 more Tamils were injured when a gang of people with knives and axes attacked the villages of Chenkalady and Kudurippu in Batticaloa district, they added. Batticaloa residents contacted by telephone said some houses were set on fire. They said they believed the killings were carried out by Muslims to avenge the massacres of people of their community by suspected Tamil guerrillas. Security sources said they had heard of some incidents in the two villages but had no details.

● **40 TAMILS,** including women and children, were hacked to death by a Muslim mob in eastern Sri Lanka on August 7 amid mounting communal tension. A leader of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), who did not wish to be identified said the incident occurred at Thirkkerni in Amparai district. He said a number of Tamil women had also been abducted by the mob and their fate was unknown. Officials were not immediately available to confirm or deny the incident. The attack on the Tamils appeared to be in retaliation for the massacre of more than 100 Muslims in two mosques at Kathankudy in the neighbouring Batticaloa the previous Friday and 50 others in the Akkaraipattu area of Amparai on the Sunday by suspected Tamil militants.

The North-East: Getting Back To Fundamentals

– Jehan Perera

The feeling that one is in the right has been a source of all kinds of intolerance throughout human history. From the Spanish Inquisition to the civil wars of Lebanon the story is the same. When we are right we do not want to give in at all even if we have to burn and kill to get our way.

In our second month of war the illusions we had continue to be dispelled. We are not as strong as we thought. If the Tigers expected to hold their positions against the security forces they have been mistaken. Countless bunkers so painstakingly built have been destroyed. The East is lost and the security forces advance, slowly but surely. In turn if the Government expected to win a quick and crushing victory with its professionalised army it has had to re-evaluate the strength of the Tiger guerrilla movement. The LTTE is more entrenched in the land and people than the JVP ever was. Nor do the security forces fight on their home territory, in their very villages of birth.

This was not a war we wanted. Nor is it one that must be permitted to drag on. The casualties are very heavy. it is a life for a life, a bullet for a bullet, a limb for a limb and an atrocity for an atrocity. An entire population threatens once again to become an enemy.

There is no slogan more calculated to dehumanise than the cry that this is a fight to the finish or that this is our last fight. But we do not like to give up the costly gains of the military battlefield. To negotiate now may seem like a betrayal of the dead.

We must, of course, remember the dead. But in seeking punishment and vengeance for unspeakable atrocities and treachery, we create more. This is perhaps why, many thousands of years ago, it is recorded 'Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord, it is not for you'. The longer we delay to negotiate the more vulnerable does our international position become. Even more disturbing, the Sinhalese and Tamils are polarised and driven under the leadership of two different and monolithic power blocs shattering the pluralism that was gradually emerging within both communities.

Different Truths

As the war continues the more polluted becomes the mental environment we live in, the more ugly the disparity between the glittering extravaganzas of Colombo and the stench and hunger of refugee camps in the North-East. Vested interests grow that benefit from the perpetuation of the war. We struggle to remain human beings and not become fired up ethnic beings. Almost against our wishes we find ourselves taking grim satisfaction in the death toll of the other side.

The natural inclination at this time is to blame others. So we blame the President. He acted alone, we say. He was too trusting. He did not take our advice and see the perfidious nature of the Tigers. Or we blame the LTTE. Once a tiger always a tiger. Young boys with big guns and no education, the Tamil counterpart of the JVP. Or we blame the 'Sinhala government' bent on preserving Sinhalese domination over the Tamil areas. Manning the police stations with Sinhalese policemen in Tamil areas, beefing up the army camps and colonising with Sinhalese settlers. All true, from our different perspectives. Limited truths that see one side of the reality and not the other.

Thus from one perspective the LTTE's sudden attack on the police stations and inexcusable slaughter of 300 (or perhaps 600) unarmed policemen may be seen as the apogee of Tiger treachery and a rejection of a last chance offered by the government to enter the mainstream through negotiation. On the other hand, from the LTTE perspective the confrontation may be seen as an inevitable one that stemmed from the government's incapacity or unwillingness to understand that the LTTE was, in turn, offering it a last chance to recognise that this was indeed a new Sri Lanka in which Sinhalese domination over the North-East had to end.

This inability to see the different sides of an issue is of course a peril of the human condition, both excusable and inevitable. But what is neither excusable nor inevitable is our reluctance to get down to basics, to fundamentals, and to get down to them with openness and without a hidden agenda.

The government and the LTTE had been negotiating for over a year. But neither side plainly said what it was prepared to settle for and what it was prepared to concede. We vaguely knew that the government was prepared to enhance the devolution package. We were even less informed about the LTTE's goal. The government and the LTTE themselves appear to be equally uncertain about each other's targets and intentions.

The Present Disputes

There are indeed some open demands the government and LTTE made of each other. The government had called upon the LTTE to lay down its arms and enter the mainstream of politics. The LTTE in turn demanded that the government should repeal the 6th amendment and hold fresh provincial elections.

The essential element in creating a new democracy and a new Lankan identity is that majority rule should yield to the principle of consensus in the area of ethnic relations. The passage of the 6th amendment in the aftermath of the July 1983 events, perceived by Tamils as a holocaust, was a clear violation of this principle. Instead of giving comfort to the devastated Tamil population, the government used its steamroller majority (kept intact by the morally questionable referendum) to give the Tamils a further slap in the face.

The repeal of the 6th amendment is not simply an LTTE demand; it accords with the sentiments of the Tamil people themselves. For that reason alone it should be repealed. Second, as long as the LTTE is armed, such a clause in the constitution is meaningless in practical terms since it is unenforceable.

However, the LTTE's other demand, the holding of fresh provincial elections is a specifically LTTE demand. It cannot be called a demand of the people of the province. Other parties, which represent both Tamil and Muslim people in the province have strongly opposed any fresh elections so long as the LTTE is armed.

Above all, the LTTE seeks recognition as the sole representative of the Tamil-speaking people. But in a democracy such a recognition cannot be bestowed by governmental decree or be obtained because of present military dominance or past sacrifice. The representative status that the LTTE craves for can only be gained when the people of the North-East choose them by voting freely at fair elections. But so long as the LTTE is armed there cannot be such free and fair elections. If the Tigers want elections then they must disarm.

The Fundamentals

But such a conclusion is only a half of the solution. For two long years the Tigers fought the mighty Indian army. They made great sacrifices for their cause. We cannot ask the LTTE to disarm and expect them and the Tamil people to believe that the government will play fair thereafter. Perhaps the Tamils do trust President Premadasa. But the President is not the government, and past governments have had a very poor record of sticking by their promises to the Tamil people. Dudley Senananayake's offer to the Federal Party to resign when his government refused to honour its agreement with the FP comes to mind. Before that, of course, was the agreement that S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike signed with S.J.V. Chelvanayakam and then tore

up in the face of Sinhalese protests.

Before insisting that the Tigers should disarm, the government must make up its mind what it is willing to offer the Tamil people. This offer must be based upon what the Tamils are *entitled to,* not upon the *balance of power.* The standard we must go by is not what the military situation dictates or what the Sinhalese feel like giving or what the Tamils feel like having, but what is internationally accepted in the International Convenants on Human Rights. As a distinct people, different from the Sinhalese in their language, religion, culture and history, the Tamils are entitled to self-determination. Minorities whether in Nigeria, Spain or the Soviet Union have been provided a high degree of autonomy in recognition of this right.

A few countries such as the Soviet Union have proclaimed in their constitutions that self-determination permits secession. But nowhere in the international human rights covenants is it said that the principle of self-determination means the right to secede. This is because setting up a separate State can violate the human rights of other people. Especially so in Sri Lanka which, unlike the massive Soviet Union, is a very small country.

For instance, the proposed state of Tamil Eelam obtained by carving out the North-East province would lead to a tiny country even more ethnically divided than the present Sri Lanka. The Tamil population in the new state would amount to only 65% of the total population. Therefore, this population would be determining the futures of the balance of 35% of the non-Tamil peoples. They in turn might wish to secede. New conflicts would arise. As in Palestine there would be an urge to expand. Divison would be no solution.

But within the political framework of a united Sri Lanka, the principle of self-determination means that the Tamils and Muslims of Sri Lanka are entitled to demand a maximum of political and economic freedom. The present provincial councils, although an improvement on previous efforts at devolving power, are considerably inadequate in this respect. The frustrations of the Chief Ministers in the Sinhalese-dominated provincial councils provides ample evidence of this inadequacy.

The Negotiables

In a newly published book titled 'The Anguish of '83', C. Suriyakumaran, a seniormost U.N. official, a professor at the London School of Economics and now on the JVP Surrender Committee, offers several valuable ideas he articulated in widely read newspaper articles between 1983 and 1989.* His writings are a testimony to the ability of a Tamil (or Sinhalese or Muslim for that matter) to overcome the anguish of separation and remain truly concerned with the well being of all people living on the island.

Regarding the Provincial Councils, Professor Suriyakumaran asserts that 'From the beginning of the first elections to the Southern Provincial Councils, the Councils found themselves meeting in hotels, town halls, other public places and anywhere else except at the Kachcheris where they should have. They had no finances worth speaking of'.

The backbone of genuine autonomy is the power to tax and to raise finances. In addition, complete power over land, police and education should be devolved, at least to the minority provinces. The Muslims must not be by-passed in this devolution process. They tend to be left out because they are often not well represented in the academic, media and expatriate arenas. So their voice is not well heard. The Muslims just as much as the Tamils are entitled to participate fully in the decision making process in those areas in which they are a majority. The merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces is not satisfactory to either the Muslims or Sinhalese living in the East.

The assertion of 'Tamil Homelands' has been the Tamil response to Sinhalese concepts of 'Sinhaladeepa' and 'Dhamma deepa' which tend to proclaim the primary if not exclusive place of the Sinhalese on the island. The psychological reaction to this concept in the Tamil mind appears to be such that an acknowledgement of some form of a Tamil homeland comprising the Northern province and at least the predominantly Tamil parts of the Eastern province will be necessary. This would not prevent the predominantly Muslim parts of the province, despite their non-contiguity, forming their own separate province. The predominantly Sinhalese parts could be merged with adjoining Sinhalese-majority provinces.

It may well be that in our concern for devolution we have neglected the issue of directly strengthening minority political involvement in the central government. Professor Suriyakumaran argues for the appointment of vice presidents and cabinet ministers on a quota system from the Tamil and Muslim communities. He eloquently advocates a system of 'Interlocking decentralisation and centralisation' which would reinforce minority participation in national level decision making.

The specifics given above are merely possibilities that can be negotiated. But the need for the government to be upfront about what the Tamil people are entitled to has nothing to do with the Tigers. To ensure its own survival the LTTE may demand more or may demand less, but this does not change the Tamil right to self-determination, to democracy, to fair elections and to honest government. The opposition parties, appear to be newly willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with the government in working out a mutually acceptable solution.

A New Attitude

What this calls for is a new attitude of mind as evinced by Professor Suriyakumaran's writings. Our political leaders, and we too, have to cultivate a supreme sensitivity to the concerns of others, a willingness to listen with patience and to give up our position if another position is shown to be better.

At a recent seminar a Tamil speaker said 'No government has understood what the Tamils really want'. Those of us in the audience thought we knew what he meant. But we did not, and so without asking him we each came to our own conclusions. This is a microcosm of a larger social problem. We do not engage in real dialogue.

Later on when the speaker was asked what he had meant he replied 'The government has gone on the basis that it is jobs, land, devolution and so on. But those are secondary issues.

'What we really want is to know we are treated equally in this country. We want to know, for instance, that the decisions of the government in supplying or not supplying food to the war affected areas are not influenced by the fact that the affected population is Tamil and not Sinhalese'.

It is only through participation in such decision making that the Tamils can be sure that the rationale underlying certain decisions was fair. In a new Sri Lanka there can be no getting away from equal partnership and team work. In the President's words what we need to do is to strive after a consensus on the future of Sri Lanka. Compromise will be important to us because it is the technology to achieve our goal.

A generous offer at the All-Party Conference, Federalism, no less, by the government at this time to the Tamil people, including the LTTE, can cause a dramatic change in the mental environment, both international and domestic, and can lead to the pro-negotiations elements within the Tamil community and even the LTTE gaining the upper hand.

The gun may very well impose conditions for peace. But it cannot create peace. Peace flows from a new attitude of mind, forgiveness and fairplay. And perhaps, as Professor Suriyakumaran concludes in his book, peace also requires faith.

** (The Anguish of '83: Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis and the Way Out by C. Suriyakumaran (1990). Published by K.V.G. de Silva, Colombo, Ltd.)*

KANTHASAMY MEMORIAL LECTURE

THE VALUE OF DISSENT

Izeth Hussain

(Continued from last issue)

I will not go into details about the undemocratic actions of our governments as they are quite well known. I will merely remark, before proceeding further, that it is surely significant that, unlike in most other democracies, whatever parties happen to be in the opposition consider whatever government happens to be in power in Sri Lanka to be anti-democratic. Since this lecture is on the value of dissent, I will make some observations on the failure of dissent in Sri Lanka. It is a fact that none of our governments have silenced the opposition in Parliament. It is also a fact that since the 'sixties our opposition parties have been renowned for their inertness. With conspicuous exceptions, such as the late Sarath Muttetuwegama, our opposition members have usually failed to shout over the grievances of the people, perhaps for a tactical reason: they shout, the Government corrects its mistakes and gets re-elected. Far better to allow the government to compound its mistakes and await their own turn, good souls, to come to power and enjoy power thoroughly. I personally believe that this is an uncharitable explanation, because there seems to be something about our culture which makes people look on power as something that is virtually sacrosanct, so that there is on the one side the government's power and on the other the opposition's non-power, and there is no point in shouting about abuse of power. The opposition's failure to utilize the opportunities for dissent might be the expression of a society's failure to value dissent.

That might be the explanation for the ease with which press freedom was eroded in the 'sixties and then destroyed in the 'seventies in Sri Lanka. The contrast with the reactions to Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency, and any attempt to muzzle the Indian press, is very striking. It has to be acknowledged that some latitude was allowed for the mini-press in Sri Lanka, and that there was even a slight extension of the latitude after 1977, but it was far from being adequate for a democracy. I say this because I had the opportunity of observing at first hand the last years of the Marcos Government in Philippines, where I was shocked to find that the Manila press under the Marcos dictatorship was certainly freer than the Sri Lanka press under the Jayewardene democracy. There can be no democracy unless the right to dissent is fully respected and that requires a really free press, not just that some latitude be allowed for the mini-press. We have not had democracy in Sri Lanka, in any worthwhile sense, since 1970, since our right to dissent has been severely constricted. It is even possible that we have been less democratic than some of the dictatorships.

The hypothesis that I have been arguing is that the belying of our hopes of 1948 shown in poor economic and other performance, and in the disastrous situation we faced in 1988-1989, was the consequence of the unconstrained power exercised by our governments. I believe that this hypothesis is supported by the changes that have been taking place in recent times. There seems to be a new responsiveness to public opinion on the part of the Government – shown for instance in what is taking place at the All-Party Conference – which has not been an outstanding characterisic of our governments for a long time. There seems to be some willingness to narrow the gap between rhetoric and reality, to perform to some extent at least in terms of what is promised, which was hardly there under the last government. And the talons of the State are being loosened from the economy. All this might have a great deal to do with the personality of President Premadasa who has over the decades acquired the reputation of being pre-eminently the doer, not just another talker. The more important reason for the change, I think, is that the Government has been shown that its power is not unlimited. This has been shown by the Tamil rebellion in the North and East, it was shown for some time by the J.V.P., and it was also shown by the I.P.K.F. There has been an awakening to reality through the dissent of the gun. It is better to allow dissent in speech and writing, rather than stamp it out and eventually face once again the dissent of the gun.

I will now address the question of the value of dissent. The observations I have made on the collapse of the Communist system in Eastern European countries, the break-down of the traditional polities of Afro-Asia, and the peculiar case of Sri Lanka, suggest that for countries outside the West the most important value of dissent is that it constrains governmental power. In the West, the power of governments has been tamed, which is not usually the case elsewhere.

Governmental power has to be constrained in some way as otherwise it can be mad and destructive. Acton's dictum that power tends to corrupt, absolute power corrupts absolutely, should be adapted to read: Power tends to derange mentally, absolute power deranges absolutely. The evidence is there in Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Ceaucescu, Papa Doc Duvalier, Somoza, Idi Amin, Bokassa and others, not to mention the great state-criminals of earlier centuries. Apart from helping in constraining power, dissent has also an obvious constructive function in relation to government. Unless conflicting views can be expressed, the Government cannot always be expected to recognize its faults and correct them. This should be self-evident, but for some reason it is not evident at all to a great many governments.

My argument seems to be contradicted by undemocratic governments which allow little or no dissent, and yet have excellent socio-economic achievements to their credit. I am quite sure that empirical studies will show that in all such cases governmental power is in fact constrained in important ways. For instance the East Asian governments and some of the ASEAN ones, may not have democratic legitimacy or may be undemocratic in practice, and may show a pathological impatience with dissent as in the case of Singapore, but in allowing a very important place for the private sector those governments are in fact limiting their power to a far greater extent that the Afro-Asian socialist or Communist governments. There could be all sorts of constraints, religious or ideological ones, anxieties about being overthrown by the military, fears of dictators about provoking rebellion, operating in undemocratic governments which show achievement. The problem is that such governments may be overtaken by power-mania at any time, and the people may suddenly find themselves sinking. It is better to allow dissent.

I will not be able in this lecture to go into all aspects of the value of dissent. The great text on this subject is John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty,* which should be required reading for everyone responsible for our politics. Rather than recapitulate Mill's arguments, whose text is easily available in Colombo, I will deal only with some aspects of the value of dissent from a Sri Lankan and Third World perspective. The *Index on Censorship,* a periodical published by Writers and Scholars International in London which is helping a Sri Lankan project to compile an anthology on the value of dissent, contains the following which should be regarded as self-evident: 'Human progress depends on the free exchange of conflicting ideas. Not merely good government, but the development of civilization itself – cultural, economic scientific – centres on this'.

The material affluence which today is available for the mass of mankind – from which many are held back by their governments – is the result of the

scientific progress which would never have been possible if dissent had been disallowed against earlier scientific orthodoxies. There would have been no Copernicus, Newton, or Einstein if not for dissent. In fact, mankind would not have made the great break-through to the neolithic stage if dissent had been disallowed against the orthodoxies of paleolithic man. We would still be cavemen if not for dissent, enjoying lives that are nasty, brutish, and short. Life is just that for a great many human beings in the Third World, where dictators will do well to reflect over the fact that the gadgets and other products of the industrial West that are so conspicuous in their life-style, and that of their supporting elites, would not have been available if not for the dissent allowed in the West. Some of the leaders of those East Asian and South East Asian economies which have done so splendidly – one of whom berates the West for its decadence and foresees those economies overtaking the West before too long – should be told that they and their economies are where they are today because of the dissent allowed in the West, which they will not allow to their own people.

Many of us in Sri Lanka will not be particularly impressed by the argument that dissent has to be valued because without it there would have been no scientific and material progress. We practice four world religions in Sri Lanka and are the inheritors of a great and ancient civilization, and civilization has far more to it than mere material progress. We cannot admire a West which has acquired gadgets and lost its soul. We should reflect on the melancholy fact that the great Asian civilizations have been decadent for centuries, and we should try to acquire an understanding of how civilizations renew themselves. It involves dissent. Civilizations stagnate or decay unless there is change, after which they become dynamic once again. Mill refers to the Reformation in Europe, the eighteenth century Enlightenment, and Germany's intellectual ferment during the time of Goethe, and writes:

'These periods differed widely in the particular opinions which they developed; but were alike in this, that during all three the yoke of authority was broken. In each an old mental despotism had been thrown off, and no new one had yet taken its place. The impulse given at these three periods has made Europe what it is now. Every single improvement which has taken place either in the human mind or in an institution, may be traced distinctly to one or the other of them'.

We need not agree with Mill's every point, only that civilization renews itself by breaking the yoke of authority and throwing off old mental despotisms. The process means dissent.

I believe that in countries such as Sri Lanka where the process of secularisation has not gone as far as in the West, we should try to ground our case for dissent firmly on religion. The origins of Hinduism are not known, but Buddhism, Christianity and Islam could not have arisen if not for dissent: the Buddha challenged Brahmin orthodoxy, Christ challenged the Judaic order and was crucified, and the Prophet Mohammed fled to Medina as the Meccan merchant-aristocracy found their pagan practices too lucrative to be given up easily. All three began with just a few disciples before they swept the world. The adherents of these three religions, as well as of Hinduism which is ecumenical in essence, have to respect dissent without which their religions would not have come into being in the first place. They may refuse to allow dissent on certain religious fundamentals, but they have to respect dissent in the secular realm.

All these four religions posit as the ultimate value on earth the individual, not the human group, in relation to the transcendental. Perhaps the right to dissent can be derived from that fact. More clearly, it can be derived from the religious position that the perfect is in the realm of the sacred, while the human is imperfect and man is fallible. Governments which refuse to allow dissent are in effect claiming infallibility: they know infallibly what is good for everyone, and therefore they silence dissent. It is no accident that some who have enjoyed absolute power have claimed to be gods, like those old Roman Emperors, or to be god-like or chock-full of the charisma which Max Weber thought was one of the sources of authority. As soon as they are chased away, shot, or hanged, it becomes apparent that no one really thought they were infallible, god-like, or charismatic. I would argue that the Government which will not allow dissent is claiming infallibility, and is therefore irreligious to the bone. There have been many such governments in religious societies.

Some would argue that dissent should be allowed in religion as well, not just in the secular realm. In every great religion orthodoxy has been challenged and schism has followed as in the case of the Bhakti cults in Hinduism, Mahayana in Buddhism, Protestantism in Christianity, and Shi'ism in Islam. Mill thought that religious schism reinvigorates orthodoxy, but rather than quote him as he was a secular-minded Western liberal I will quote one of Emperor Asoka's rock edicts:

'One should not honour only one's own religion and condemn the religion of others, but one should honour others' religion for this or that reason. So doing one helps one's own religion to grow and renders service to the religions of others too. In acting otherwise one digs the grave of one's own religion and also does harm to other religions'.

The Emperor Asoka was of course speaking about tolerance towards other religions. It is difficult to see how one can tolerate other religions which deny the fundamentals of one's own religion, and at the same time be intolerant of schismatic developments which accept those fundamentals.

This predominant religion of Sri Lanka, Buddhism, seems to be pre-eminently the religion of dissent. The Buddhist is asked not to take anything on faith, not to follow a master blindly, and to come to the truth through his own experience. I will not quote the Buddha's well-known advice to the Kalamas, or any other Buddhist text, but refer only to the succinct and categorical statement of one of our authorities on Buddhism, the Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula, who wrote in his book *What the Buddha Taught:* **'The freedom of thought allowed by the Buddha is unheard of elsewhere in the history of religions'.** Perhaps a Buddhist will hold that a Buddhist government which refuses to allow dissent is not being Buddhist.

Buddhism seems to give a rather unusual place to truth, which of course is a central value in all religions, because according to Buddhism everything else, including love, is in an ultimate sense bondage. I have already pointed to the integral connection between truth and dissent. When we dissent we do so, except when we are deploying forensic skills at the debating society level, in terms of what we regard as the truth. I might mention parenthetically as it were, Michel Foucault's essay *Disciplinary Power and Subjection* which begins by discussing the triangular relationship between power, right, and truth. The discourse of power always claims to be the discourse of truth, and the delimitation of power, and our rights, are also legitimated in terms of what is regarded as the truth.

Instead of becoming too theoretical, I must now point to the obvious practical value of truth. When we refuse to value the truth, our capacity to recognise reality, what is out there in the world, is lessened and our grasp of reality is weakened. That is why governments which have contempt for the truth, which lie all the time and come to believe their own lies, which cannot allow the dissent that points to the truth, so often lead their countries to disaster.

Such governments also diminish the humanity of the people subjected to their power, for something about being properly human demands the truth, even though we find it socially expedient to lie frequently. Wyndham Lewis in *The Writer and the Absolute*

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claimed that he found himself paralysed the moment he tried to write something that he did not regard as true, which he thought as the consequence not so much of moral scruple as of what he called **'Our nature's rootedness in fact'**. The artist, he thought cleaves to the true but the gravitational pull of the true is felt by everyone, in one degree or another, because 'truth is as necessary to everybody as the air we breathe'. And Simone Weil, in her *The Need for Roots*, thought that the denial of total freedom of expression makes our intelligence ill at ease and, as she put it, **'The whole soul is sick'**. When we are denied the right to dissent in terms of what we see as the truth, we become less than fully and properly human. I suppose that is the reason why the sub-human has been erupting in so many Afro-Asian countries.

In Sri Lanka, during 1988-89 we saw the sub-human erupting with terrifying force. We must ask ourselves whether that was because we were denied the right to dissent in terms of what we saw as the truth, and were consequently less than fully and properly human. There was no press freedom worth talking about, and our opposition parties shockingly failed to express the dissent of the people after 1960. That led to the dissent of the gun. On the one hand we had the thesis of Sinhala extremism in the J.V.P., and on the other the antithesis of Tamil extremism in the militants, with no prospects whatever of a synthesis. But we must note that both groups of extremists shared one dogma in common to which they were fiercely committed: their right to murder anyone who disagreed with them. The denial of dissent in speech and writing, except to a derisory extent, had led to the dissent of the gun which itself would not allow dissent. We saw the sub-human erupting and we now have a respite. We really must learn to respect truth and to value dissent.

In concluding this lecture I must revert to the late Kanthasamy's exceptional commitment to the truth. He wanted the *Saturday Review* to be published in Jaffna because out of 13 daily newspapers only one was being published there, which meant that developments in the North and East were seen inevitably from the perspective of Colombo. He wanted that information imbalance to be corrected because he thought it important for people to know the truth. In a letter written from London in 1986 he regretted that the *Saturday Review* had not published contrary views, and added: **'We should take extreme care to preserve the freedom of the press which is achieved more by publishing conflicting views rather than by suppressing any'**. Evidently he saw the truth as something that could be reached only through dissent. And for him the truth was not just the object of a lonely intellectual pursuit, but a supreme value that had to be put into practice. Insisting that the foreign donors of his Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation Organization be told the truth about the difficulties it was facing in the North, he wrote: **'. . .and I am not willing to act on any basis other than the truth'**. With that kind of commitment to the truth, he had to dissent and he paid the price for his dissent. But we cannot be quite sane unless we have some respect for the truth and value dissent. His untimely death has therefore to be seen as a tragic event in which the mad erupted. I look on him as having been a fortress of sanity in a country wrecked by the mad.

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tured policemen while they were in LTTE custody in Jaffna on two occasions during the month of July, according to the ICRC press communique.

EDF/EROS To Sever Links With Plantation Workers

Plantation sector members of the EROS and EDF have been told by V. Balakumar, the General Secretary of EDF, that they must form their own separate organisational system among the plantation communities and function in future without any links with North-Eastern politics, former EDF, MP for the plantation community, M. Ramalingam said recently.

Asked why such a decision had been taken, Mr. Ramalingam replied that the on-going war in the North-East of the country had no connection whatever with the up-country plantation community who therefore had to be protected.

'A survey of opinion among the cadres who had belonged to the EROS and EDF, has indicated that some of them were now desirous of joining up with the up-country plantation sector trade unions.

Some others, however, had indicated that they would like to set up a new trade union, while still others had wanted to form a new political party', Mr. Ramalingam explained.

A three-member committee chaired by Mr. Ramalingam and consisting of Messrs Sudhaharan and Kanagaratnam is now in the process of bringing about complete dissolution of the work of EROS and EDF in the up-country plantation areas, Mr. Ramalingam further said.

Appeal by NGOs to Govt. & LTTE

The following demands have been presented by a concerned group of NGOs regarding the present conflict in the North and East.

Our appeal to both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan State is:

Take all steps possible to safeguard and protect unarmed civilians in the areas of conflict and permit the International Committee of the Red Cross to carry out all its functions in the affected areas;

Declare and implement a ceasefire with immediate effect, and arrange for an international monitoring committee to oversee the ceasefire;

Seek a negotiated settlement to the conflict, not a military one; at the same time urge the Sri Lankan state to take some concrete action to restore the confidence of the Tamil people in the Sri Lankan state; the following are some of the steps it should immediately take –

Repeal the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution (this amendment which was rushed through in the aftermath of the events of July 1983 is a major obstacle to the democratic right to express a political opinion; in particular, it is seen as a limitation placed on the freedom of political expression of the Tamil people);

Strengthen the Provincial Councils structure and the process of devolution of power and withdraw the two proposed amendments to the Provincial Council Bill; (the amendments will place the power of dissolution of the council in the hands of the non elected state officials and pose a major threat to the very concept of devolution of power as enshrined in the Provincial Council Legislation);

Take immediate steps to constitute the North East Peace Committee and prepare the groundwork for the initiation of democratic political processes;

Begin a process of negotiation to solve the ethnic conflict on a lasting basis with the participation of all Tamil political parties and organisations; discussions must centre on the concrete political and economic demands of the Tamil people;

In the meantime we urge all concerned, particularly the mass media to refrain from any action or expression that might inflame ethnic passions and further embitter the relations among our many ethnic groups.

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'TAMIL PEOPLE'S GRAVEST CRISIS IN THEIR HISTORY'

The London-based Standing Committee of Tamils (SCOT) has called upon foreign governments, governmental and non-governmental organisations to bring pressure upon the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) for an immediate cessation of armed hostilities, for an end to all human rights violations by both warring parties and to provide urgently needed humanitarian assistance to an estimated 500,000 refugees displaced as a direct consequence of the continuing armed conflict.

A press release dated 1 August, issued by SCOT states:

The Tamil people of Sri Lanka are today facing the gravest crisis in their history in consequence of the 'war' that has broken out between the government and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). Never before have the civilian population in the north-east of Sri Lanka been subjected to the scale of violence, violations, death, destruction and displacement that has occurred since June 11. Every succeeding day has brought more havoc and devastation to the Tamil areas of the island.

An estimated 500,000 people have been uprooted from their homes and even from the areas of their residence and become refugees. Despite the attempts by the Sri Lankan Navy to prevent their escape, over 50,000 refugees, the young and the old, the sick and the infirm, women and children, have taken the boat again and fled to South India. The worst affected areas are the districts of Amparai, Batticaloa and Trincomalee in the east and Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Mannar, Kilinochchi and Jaffna in the north covering almost the entirety of the populated parts of the north-east.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, nearly 1600 civilians have been killed and this figure excludes the casualties among the security forces and the LTTE cadres.

The primary cause of this mounting refugee problem and the large scale civilian deaths is the continuing war between government forces and the LTTE and the unprecedented large scale military operations conducted from land, air and sea. Although the government claims that the operations are directed against the LTTE, the reality is that it is the defenceless civilian population that has become gravely affected. Having been forced to evacuate from their homes, hundreds of thousands of people are suffering without food and other essential facilities. The towns and villages are virtually deserted. In certain areas, several hundreds of homes and shops have been set ablaze and destroyed and the people driven out by government forces, and this is particularly the case in Trincomalee district where the government claims that its forces had regained control. A virtual economic blockade has been imposed in the north east, particularly in the Jaffna district, which has brought the people to the point of starvation. The Jaffna peninsula in the north continues to remain completely cut-off from the rest of the island without transport, telecommunications and postal services.

Medical services have come to a grinding halt in most areas and have been severely disrupted in others. Almost all the major hospitals have been closed either due to violence and military operations or for lack of medical supplies and staff who had to flee for safety. Even emergency services are unavailable in certain areas. In the context of the thousands crowded in makeshift refugee camps, airborne and waterborne diseases have become an acute problem.

In an ostensible effort to dislodge the LTTE from their entrenched positions, government forces have been conducting a continuing barrage of indiscriminate aerial and naval bombardment of several areas resulting in several hundreds of casualties and destruction of an unaccounted number of public and private buildings. Navy gunboats have been firing shells, rockets and other incendiary devices at coastal towns and villages. Helicopter gunships and attack aircraft have continued to indiscriminately strafe and bomb causing death and destruction on an unprecedented scale. In their bombing operations, the airforce has dropped lethal 'barrel bombs' – metal caskets each loaded with 45 to 75 gallons of liquid chemical substances fitted with incendiary devices – that cause ferocious fires when they hit the ground resulting in widespread civilian casualties and destruction of property. Most of the buildings, including houses, churches, schools, convents, libraries, shops and offices, in the city of Jaffna have been flattened in this continuing bombing campaign.

What is worse is that even the most basic norms relating to armed conflict laid down in international humanitarian and human rights covenants are being flagrantly violated in this continuing war. Captured or surrendered 'prisoners' in their hundreds have been found murdered. Hundreds of civilians, Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims, have fallen victims of deliberate revenge killings. The paramilitary outfit known as the Special Task Force has been deployed in the Tamil areas where they are committing the most barbarous atrocities for which they became notorious in the recent past in the south of the island – hacking, shooting and burning people in the most brutal and indiscriminate manner. Ever since the deployment of this force, bodies with gunshot injuries, burning bodies on roadsides, mutilated and severed bodies – heads without bodies and bodies without heads – and 'disappearances' have become commonplace in several parts of the north-east.

The fund of sympathetic response from international governmental and non-governmental organisations to the Tamil point of view and the active support forthcoming from the Indian government and people were crucial factors that prevented previous attempts to impose a military solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and deny the Tamil people their legitimate rights. But it is unfortunate that the war that is raging today in the north-east of the island is taking place in the context of an abysmal lack of concern by the international community despite the unprecedented scale of death, destruction and intolerable hardships experienced by the civilian population and gross violations of human rights that the continuance of war entails.

It is time that the international community – governments, governmental and non-governmental organisations – alerts itself to the enormity of the tragedy that is being enacted in the north-east of Sri Lanka, bring pressure for an immediate cessation of armed hostilities between the government and the LTTE, call for the strict adherence of international humanitarian and human rights covenants, and provide urgently needed humanitarian assistance to the refugees and all adversely affected people.

Continued From Page 7

There is also fresh thinking on the crucial issue of the referendum which would decide the delinking of the East from the North, postponed several times to appease Tamil demands that the merger be considered permanent. Southern political parties against the merger from the beginning are determined to have the two provinces delinked, and SLMC President Ashraff who was against a referendum being held says he now has an open mind about it, specially after the massacre of Muslims in the Eastern Province.

Political questions however will take a back seat until the fighting on the ground is resolved, concerned citizens are agreed that only international mediation can bring about a cessation of hostilities as a starting point to negotiations.

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Refugee Influx Into Tamil Nadu

Ganesh Chandra

RAMESHWARAM: If the way the refugees pour into Tamil Nadu from the northern parts of Sri Lanka is any indication then trouble is in store for both the Centre and State governments in meeting the challenge posed by the ever increasing refugee influx that threatens to eat away a large chunk of the resources of the exchequer.

The sight is pathetic. Their tales are moving. Men, women and children land on the shores, some of them half naked and others on the verge of tears due to starvation and fatigue. Their faces brighten when they set their foot on Indian soil, for they know this is a country that will not turn them back or dump them into the sea.

With the war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan government forces assuming intensity and culminating in a now or never battle to gain complete and total supremacy in the Jaffna peninsula, a section of the 15,000 refugees who have landed in India want nothing less than a direct intervention by India to restore peace in the troubled island country.

'There is a yearning for a direct Indian intervention and the return of the Indian Army', said Balakumar, a 28-year-old shopkeeper in Vadukovil in Mannar district who is now in the Mandapam refugee camp near here. Many others, whose tales of woe are shocking and heartbreaking, sincerely hope that India would not let them down.

'Things were much better when the Indian Army was there. Of course, there were skirmishes now and then followed by search operations in which young men suspected to be LTTE sympathisers would be taken into the army camps for questioning. But normal life was never allowed to be thrown out of gear. The roads were open, the bazaars were full of goods and above all, the Indian Army did not kill for the sake of killing.

'Now the situation in most parts of the Tamil province is so bad that there is virtually no security of life. Food stocks are running dangerously low and starvation deaths could begin. The Black Shirts and Green Tigers attached to the Sri Lankan forces are going about chopping off the limbs of young men, who are all dubbed *Kottiyas* (Tigers)', Balakumar explained.

Kandan, also from Mannar district, says: 'The Indian Army was not against the common people. It was only against the terrorists. We know that the LTTE would not be happy about the IPKF coming back, but for the sake of the common people, it must come'. According to Kandan, people were somewhat fed up with the Tigers, though they acknowledge their bravery and commitment to get an independent Tamil Eelam.

'But we cannot but want peace if for every Sinhalese soldier killed, 100 Tamils have to lay down their lives', Kandan argued. The people seem to be losing faith in the LTTE with the guerrillas openly expressing their inability to protect the population from strafing by the helicopters and the incendiary 'barrel bombs' (barrels filled with petrol mixed with some chemical which burst into flames upon hitting the ground) dropped by bombers of the Sri Lankan Airforce.

Said George, a carpenter from Nanatan in Mannar district: 'The LTTE has told us clearly through notices stuck on the walls, that they cannot protect us and that we are free to seek shelter anywhere we think fit. The Tigers are losing ground rapidly and it is likely that they might be wiped out. Only India can help us now'. Asked if India should directly intervene or aid the Tigers with arms, George said: 'Enabling the Tigers to fight is not going to take the people very far. If only the IPKF was there, there would be no war now', sighed George.

Sivaratinam, a 48-year-old shopkeeper from Vavuniya has come with his two teenaged boys, but has left his wife and daughter back in the troubled land. Asked why, he said: 'I was afraid that either the Tigers or the Sri Lanka Green Tigers would take my sons away. The Tigers might draw them into their net while the Green Tigers are on the prowl catching hold of boys and chopping off their hands or feet to prevent them from being of any use to the Tigers'.

There are Tiger supporters among the refugees. The Tigers are generally hailed as the only group 'genuinely committed' to the idea of securing a Tamil Eelam, which many see as the only lasting solution to the Sinhalese-Tamil problem in Sri Lanka. There is also a widespread feeling among the refugees that the Tigers and the Tamils had been cheated by the Premadasa government.

The Premadasa government promises a whole lot of things to the Tigers but was giving away nothing. 'This fight became inevitable', argued Emiliyan, a boatman who has been making the trip to Rameswaram for the third time in the last 10 days. The feeling against a direct Indian intervention seemed to be strong among Tamils from Jaffna from where the LTTE draws its support.

It is reported that people who were waiting to come to India were waiting on the beach for three days and nights without a morsel of food. 'A Christian priest tried to arrange for some food, but little could be done', they said. There are no hospitals in Mannar. 'People will soon be left to die. Such deaths might have occurred if some Red Cross workers had not come to work among us', Emiliyan said.

Prices have shot up in the past one month and there was much black marketeering, according to George from Mannar. 'Paddy is selling at Rs.(SL) 600 a bag, sugar at 80 a kilo, petrol at Rs 200 a litre and diesel at Rs. 60 a litre and rice at Rs. 22 a kilo, prices which are much more than in India', George said. All this would have been acceptable if things were available. 'The trouble is things are simply not there'.

The boatmen charge anything between Rs. 300 to Rs. 1500 per head for ferrying the refugees. Since many poor people could not pay the boatmen, they were stranded in Pesalai waiting for some good samaritan to ferry them across, free. The refugees had to walk miles, in some cases, hundreds of miles to reach Mannar, as bus transport had come to a halt after the Sri Lankan air force started the aerial attacks.

On arrival in Dhanushkodi, what the refugees see is a vast expanse of land, treeless and almost totally uninhabited. The state authorities come into the picture only when the refugees reach Rameswaram 15 kms away. Hungry and tired they have to bargain with private van operators at Rs. 10 per head, they are packed into the vehicles like sardines. Those who don't have Indian money, walk the distance.

The refugees sell small things like soap and flash lights to make a few Indian rupees to enable them to buy some food or tea. Refugee camp authorities are tremendously overburdened. 'We are unable to plan for the day because nobody knows how many would land today and when', said an exasperated official who hadn't slept for three days. State transport buses are taking the refugees to camps elsewhere in Tamil Nadu continuously to relieve the pressure on Rameswaram.

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READERS FORUM

EXPATRIATES AND EXILES

I WISH to clarify B. Skanthakumar's criticism (*Tamil Times*, June 1990) on my previously published letter on the actions of expatriate Tamils. I am afraid that his presumption is wrong and my comments were made against the expatriates (as the title stated) and not against the Tamil political exiles and refugees.

Skanthakumar has sarcastically noted my comments as 'an attempt by an expatriate Tamil to salve his own conscience'. I wonder on what grounds he had deduced my status as an expatriate and not as an exile. The Webster's dictionary defines an expatriate as one who 'renounces the rights of citizenship where one was born and becomes a citizen of another country'. An exile is one who 'abandons one's country or removes to a foreign country for residence, either from choice or necessity'.

So that the *Tamil Times* readers are not misled by Skanthakumar's unverified misinformation, I wish to state that I am also an exile and not an expatriate. I still hold a Sri Lankan passport and I have not gained permanent resident status in the counry I am residing now. To be precise, I left Sri Lanka in August 1981 for my doctoral studies, after receiving two Masters degrees from the University of Peradeniya and after being rejected four times (not once or twice) for a permanent teaching position in the University of Jaffna (God only knows the internal politics!) between 1978 and 1981. For the past nine years I have lived only in rented apartments and have not even owned a car.

Skanthakumar also pointed out that my 'attack on the "dinner and dance" events. . .have little moral foundation', since most of these events have a charitable motive. Well, if it is so, I wonder why I do not see any announcements in the *Tamil Times* about the cash collected in these 'dinner and discos', and what percentage of the collected sum is being donated to the Sri Lankan institutions? Isn't it courteous to inform the readers about these donations, however meagre the sum is? Only the announcements about the events are published in the *Tamil Times* and beyond that one is not kept informed about the proceeds.

Finally Skanthakumar's parting comment on the socio-economic development of the Tamil diaspora needs in-depth study and I wish when space permits, the *Tamil Times* will publish diverse opinions from expatriates, exiles as well as Sri Lankan natives, on what will be the status of Tamil diaspora in the 21st century and how it should be guided? Will the children and grandchildren of present-day exiles continue to identify themselves with the Tamil culture? Or will they become assimilated into the ethnic minorities of the host countries? Will they discard the Tamil names and cultural markers as 'unwanted baggage from the past' and carry only the remnants of Tamil food habits? Well, we have too many questions to find answers.

Sachi Sri Kantha

330 Henry Avenue,
Philadelphia,
U.S.A.

WRONG POLITICS AND OVER CONFIDENCE

THE TAMILS of Sri Lanka have always eschewed communism and espoused democracy. The PFLT constitution published during the LTTE/Government negotiation period, and which I have just seen, is a communist constitution. It has a communist structure and communist ideology, having a Politburo and Political Commissars and with the aim of supporting world liberation struggles like Gadaffi and Castro. Under these circumstances, when communism is collapsing all around us, how can the valiant Tigers expect to win votes and gain the recognition of the Government? They should have changed their ideology with the advent of perestroika to move with the times. What has the so-called theoretician and political mentor Anton Balasingham got to say now? It is obvious that he has misled the 'boys'. It is an accepted human failing that when one is brain-washed into believing something, the brain refuses to recognise or accept anything else. That is why they have re-education courses in North Vietnam for repatriated refugees and other non-communists in their country. A re-education course is really a brain-washing course.

As I have pointed out before, the LTTE cannot win the war with only an irregular guerrilla army. Afghanistan is a case in point where, like the Tamils, they too are unable to unite and have many factions. I salute the LTTE for their valiant liberation struggle for my people but I feel that their wrong politics and over confidence after chasing the IPKF away have militated against them. The foreign IPKF had to complete their job within a fixed time frame, whereas the Sri Lankan army has no such restrictions and are of the people.

The only thing left to do now is to renounce the communist ideology and talk of 'Democracy' rather than 'Democratic Socialism' because now 'Socialism' is a dirty word. The next thing to do is to internationalise our cause and seek foreign assistance in seeking a suitable settlement with the Sri Lankan Government.

I have composed a little poem to indicate my thinking on the matter;–

Tiger, Tiger burning bright,
In the shadows of the night,
In your jungle hide you are king by night,
But not so by day, when the Lion has better sight,
You thought you were triumphant,
Because you chased the Elephant,
Now in our little island,
You too are an island,
With the ammo gone and to fight too ill,
All you've got now is the cyanide pill.

If you want to be triumphant,
You've now got to bum the Elephant,
Having kicked the Elephant's bum before,
He will not want to come again,
So try Uncle Sam, who could be a generous man,
To consider giving us all a Marshall plan,
Then you won't have to take the pill in vain,
And with the Lion make friends again.

Otherwise, dear Tiger, there is nothing left for you to do,
Than to do what a man's got to do,
To reach for the pill and with a drink swallow,
For eternal peace to soon follow.

So Tiger, Tiger, burning bright,
In the shadows of the night,
It's time you stopped this bloody fight,
And took advice about your plight,
So throw that blasted pill away,
And let negotiations show the way.

It is obvious that leftist Balasingham and his entourage do not fit the bill any more. They have to be replaced by more erudite persons with a more liberal and democratic mentality. Could somebody please help?

Lt. Col. Anton J.N. Selvadurai

8 Blenheim Court,
Stoke-on-Trent
U.K.

UNITE BEHIND THE LTTE

The LTTE made a big blunder in alienating India and placing its trust in the Sri Lankan government. Having got rid of the IPKF with the help of the LTTE, now the government has turned against the Tamils as could have been well anticipated.

Now that the LTTE is leading the fight, all Tamils should unite behind the LTTE and support it to resist the government's offensive. The other Tamil groups should not permit themselves to be used by the government to isolate the LTTE. If the LTTE is defeated, that means the Tamil people will be defeated.

Your journal is good reading, but you must openly call its readers to support the LTTE in this our hour of need.

P. Sri Kanthan

Tooting,
London SW17,
U.K.

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FALSE PROPAGANDA

IT SEEMS your magazine has still not improved in focusing the plans that the Sinhalese government have in their mind to destroy the entire Tamils from Tamil Eelam.

Why can't you show the entire world about the atrocities the Sinhalese have unleashed against the Tamils? The Sinhalese government is giving out false propaganda that 140 Muslims were killed by the Tigers which is not true.

Rather than criticising the only genuine Tamil group, 'The Tigers', better you spend some more time to get some recognition for Tamil Eelam.

S. Balasothy

101 Swarthmore Road,
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FOUL & VILE

TO BE in tune with your editorial policy you should retitle your monthly: ANTI-TAMIL TIMES. Your editor is so foul and vile!!

S. Pothalingam

GOING TOO FAR TO RUIN

I AM HAPPY to read the *Tamil Times* which I think has a great future. I envisage a time when it would be a great link between all our people scattered all over the world.

I am glad that you have taken a balanced view of the situation in regard to the present struggle. Both in your editorials and other articles, you are voicing the longing of the Tamil people for peace after so many years of suffering. Your stress on the urgent task for both warring parties to arrive at a ceasefire is most appropriate. What you feared for the people is happening now. I had great respect for the LTTE for the courage with which they fought in the past, but now I feel that they are going too far; this may ultimately result in the ruin of the Tamil community.

I am also glad that you gave so much of space to praise the service rendered by Sam Thambimuttu. He was a good man and it is a sin that he and his wife were killed.

We do not know what is going to happen; having lived all my life of 85 years among our people in Jaffna, and come only recently on a visit which has become unduly prolonged, I am deeply worried about our people back at home.

C. Subramaniam

Hartside Grange,
Hartlepool,
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'TIGERS ARE TAMILS & TAMILS ARE TIGERS'

YOU SEEM to lament that the response of the international community to what is happening to the Tamils in Sri Lanka is 'subdued, non-responsive or muted' (Editorial, *Tamil Times*, June 1990). Can you expect anything better when you continue to hold a brief for the LTTE?

The LTTE and its supporters do not fail to frequently claim that they are the 'sole representatives' of the people, and that 'all Tigers are Tamils and all Tamils are Tigers'! Unfortunately, many outside Sri Lanka would appear to have taken this claim to be true to the detriment of the entire Tamil community. And that is why, when the Tigers were recently alleged to have massacred defenceless Muslim civilians in the eastern province, 'The Independent' and 'The Times', both leading dailies published in the UK, carried news reports in the editions of 13 August 1990 with the following headlines: 'TAMILS KILL 350 MUSLIMS IN SRI LANKA' and 'TAMILS KILL 116 MUSLIMS'!

With such headlines plus reports that these 'sole representatives' eliminate members of their own community just because they hold a different point of view, gun down Members of Parliament in front of foreign embassies in Colombo (as in the case of Mr. Sam Thambimuttu and his wife who were killed in front of the Canadian High Commission), and kill their political rivals even in foreign lands (as in the case of the recent killing of EPRLF leaders in Madras), one should not be surprised that international opinion is not only 'subdued, non-responsive or muted', but also has become somewhat hostile. The Tamil community is paying the price with their lives for the actions of their 'sole representatives'.

Besides, today the Tamil community is in the pitiable plight of not having a leader with stature and recognition to make even a statement denouncing the atrocities committed against them or to make an appeal on behalf of the people to foreign governments. Mr. A. Amirthalingam, the TULF leader, who could have performed this task, was executed as a 'traitor'. And the Supreme Commander of the 'sole representatives' remains underground in hiding without even being seen or heard by the people.

No wonder that the Sri Lankan Minister of Defence, Ranjan Wijeratne, arrogantly claimed at a recent press conference: 'The Tamil community in this country is now leaderless. All its leaders have been killed in internecine warfare. What we find today is the LTTE without leadership. We will wipe them out. In future, we ourselves will have to give leadership to the Tamils and that we will do'. The LTTE and the rich expatriate Tamils who continue to support it are responsible for bringing the Tamil community to this plight.

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Book Review

An Invaluable Data-base

ETHNIC CONFLICT AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN SRI LANKA: AN ANNOTATED BILIOGRAPHY

Kumar Rupesinghe & Bertha Verstappen

Published by the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, by Hans Zell Publishers (London, Munich, New York), 1989, pp xiv + 565, price not mentioned.

Which is the best place to look for systematically organised, comprehensive research material on the persisting ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka? India? No; Sri Lanka? No. It is, surprisingly, Oslo, which has no more than a tiny Tamil population of 8000. This is because of an important data base project undertaken by the International Peace Research Institute of Oslo under the competent and committed guidance of Dr. Kumar Rupesinghe, a well known Sri Lankan socially active scholar. This data base has collected more than 5000 documents on the various dimensions of the island's ethnic conflict since it erupted in its ugliest form in 1983. The bibliography under review is a part of the data base project and inspite of its hefty (565 + pages) and exhaustive (2311 entries) appearance, covers much less than half of the wealth of material collected.

The bibliography has been organised under some fifteen subjects that range widely – covering political participation. Tamil and Sinhala nationalisms, violence and militarization of the Tamil and Sinhala communities as well as the Sri Lankan State, issues related to refugees, human rights and citizenship, and international aspects involving India and other extenal factors. In selecting entries under each of these subjects, their relevance to the main focus of ethnic conflict has been carefully kept in mind. And yet, the sources tapped go even beyond the narrow definition of Tamil-Sinhala ethnic conflict. For instance, the bibliography contains more than fifty very valuable entries on the Sinhala insurgency (JVP) movement that has torn the peace and order in the island nation apart and is posing a more serious challenge today than the ethnic conflict. Similarly, Sri Lankan armed forces carry more than 50 references and the Indian Peace Keeping Force more than a hundred.

The annotations are of very high quality. They are crisp, sharp and yet informative. The expert handling of the annotations have considerably enhanced the value of this bibliography. A careful perusal of the annotations on a particular theme helps develop basic ideas and also some insight into the unfolding of the specific events of the ethnic tragedy. The diversity of the sources presented helps the reader to keep a balanced perspective on those specific events. The inclusion of unpublished documents further introduce those aspects that have so far remained inaccessible to the majority of the Sri Lanka watchers. The triple faceted index – subject, author and geographical at the end of the bibliography make the search for any particular item easy.

The compilation is, however, not without limitations. The period covered in the volume is between 1983-1988. This is to concentrate on the violence on the ethnic issue but then there has been violence on the ethnic question in Sri Lanka even earlier, though of much less serious magnitude. Even the roots of the present conflict lie deep into Sri Lanka's historical and post-colonial socio-economic and political developments. The bibliography does not cover these aspects of economic and social developments even for the period on which it has focussed otherwise. The only redeeming aspect is that the authors are aware of these gaps and have a reasonable explanation for the exclusion of these entries. It would also have been better if the compendium could include sources and materials available in parliamentary debates in India and Sri Lanka as well as feature articles published in newspapers of these two and other countries. It is interesting to note here that such newspaper articles that have, reappeared in journals or books have however, been covered for annotations. The authors are aware of the fact that only English language material with some exceptions of the Sinhala and Tamil material available in translated annotations has been explored in this bibliography.

While talking of the gaps and shortcomings, one must be objectively conscious of the resource and space constraints within which such a data base project has to be carried out. One in fact will have to launch a series of such annotated bibliographies to put all the relevant material in annotated form at one place. This the present volume could not have done in one go. Nonetheless, the bibliography is of immense value. It acquaints us with the vast research material that lies scattered. The authors promise to transfer this data base as a whole to institutions in Sri Lanka. Perhaps they could also think of transferring it to willing host institutions in other countries for wider dissemination and easy access.

S.D. Muni

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Book Review

Political Killings in Southern Sri Lanka: a compilation and report by Eduardo Marino. London: International Alert 1989, 120pp.

The apparent calm in the Sri Lankan political scene following the suppression of the JVP by the ruthless liquidation of its leadership and the withdrawal of the IPKF is deceptive. The events in Eastern Europe have shifted the attention of the media away from the third world except in the event of a major disaster and this is not surprising since news value is always more precious than the plight of poor nations. It is therefore important that concerned individuals and human rights organizations maintain their vigilance irrespective of media interest in third world events. Eduardo Marino's work is, therefore, a welcome contribution and such work should be encouraged in every possible way. However, the criticism of such contributions is also important to ensure accuracy of the information compiled.

The compilation of data on political killings in Sri Lanka can never be complete since an attempt is always made to cover up and to distort information. But the long list of confirmed killings is sufficient to indicate the staggering scale of the continuing tragedy. This, however, cannot be the sole aim of the study. There is a need to understand and to explain the social, political and economic background and to seek a way forward and out of this morass. My criticism concerns mainly the presentation of the socio-political background.

The author has depended heavily on a handful of sources to explain the background and, despite their apparent diversity, the bias inherent in the sources is inevitably carried into the study when large chunks of material are quoted without critical appraisal of the source. The source most heavily quoted from is 'Violence in Sri Lanka: Conceptual Issues' in "Ethical Dilemmas of Development in Asia" by Godfrey Gunatilleke et al (1983). The quotations from this article (Part 2, pp8-9) suggest that the abortive coup of 1962 involved Christian and Hindu interests and was non-political in

Continued On Page 26

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Jaffna Hindu brothers *seek attractive, good natured, educated bride under 32 for tall, young, handsome, International Design Consultant, running own freelance establishment in States. Religion no bar. Horoscope, details to M 413 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Catholic *seeks partner for sister, 39, pretty, looks much younger, typist, innocent divorcee, no children. M 414 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Tamil Hindu sister *seeks fair, attractive bride under 28 for accountant brother, 33. Details with photograph to M 415 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Tamil lawyer *seeks good looking bride under 40 years. Divorcees without encumbrances considered. M 416 c/o Tamil Times.*

Groom *sought for Sri Lankan Tamil lady, 42, single with no ties, British citizen, nurse living near London. Details to M 417 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu, USA settled brother, Ph.D., engineer *seeks groom for sister, 33, science graduate teaching in Colombo. Reply with horoscope. M 418 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu Tamil *seeks groom for niece, 37, in good employment, British and Australian citizen. Horoscope, details to M 419 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu Brothers *seek groom for good looking sister, 34, accounts clerk in London, innocent divorcee, excellent character. M 420 c/o Tamil Times.*

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent marriages.

Henry *son of the late Mr V.S. Brainerd and Mrs P. Brainerd of 4 Edirigoda Road, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka and* **Vathsala** *daughter of the late Dr. P. Nadarajah (Zambia) and Mrs. S. Nadarajah of 7 Clavering Avenue, Barnes, London SW13 9DX on 18.8.90 at Shree Ganapathy Temple, London SW19.*

Anton (Joanes) *son of the late Mr. S. Singarayer and Mrs. U. Singarayer, Singarayer Wallawu, Myliddy, Sri Lanka and* **Lingishiya (Jothy)** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Sivasothy, 263/2 Kandy Road, Jaffna, Sri Lanka on 22.8.90 at St. Josephs Catholic Church, High Road, Wembley, Middx., U.K.*

Dr. Ravi *son of Dr. & Mrs. T. Ratnavel of 20 Langley Way, Watford, U.K. and* **Pami** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. C. Kathiresan of 299 Torbay Road, Harrow, U.K. on 24.8.90 at the Battersea Town Hall, London SW11.*

OBITUARIES

Mrs. Sivam Mahendran *beloved wife of the late C. Mahendran of Ceylon Theatres Ltd., Mother of Nirmala, Shanthini, Kumuthini; Mother-in-Law of Vipulanandarajah (U.K.), Mailvaganan (U.K.), Chitsabesan (Canada); Grandmother of Roshini, Shankar, Ramesh, Ravi, Mahen, Mithran and Lakshman. Passed away in Canada on 28-7.90.*

Dr. K. Sathiamoorthy, *Senior Medical Officer, Brixton Prison, U.K. & Dr. (Mrs) Tharmavalli Sathiamoorthy (nee Dharmalingham), Sutton Hospital, U.K.; beloved parents of Vaseekaran and Anandan passed away on 15.8.90 under tragic circumstances in a car accident, while on holiday in Malaysia. Funeral was in Malaysia on 20.8.90. – 16 Sprucedale Gardens, Wallington, Surrey SM16 9LB, U.K. Tel: 081-669 8341.*

Mankayarkarasy Sivasampu *(57), beloved wife of Chelliah Sivasampu (Formerly of PWD), Mother of Bremakumar and Suriyakumar (both of U.K.); Sister of Hari Nagaratnam (U.K.), Sivasubramaniam (Sri Lanka), Indra Samuel (U.K.) and Sivakumar (Sri Lanka) passed away in U.K. on 2nd August 1990. Cremation took place on 8th August 1990 – 15 Wolsey Way, Chessington, Surrey. Tel: 081-397 8279.*

IN MEMORIAM

Second Anniversary of the passing away of **Mr. K.C. Kumarasuriyar** *on 23rd July 1988. Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Yoges, Children Brindha, Mano, Ganga and Subathra, Son-in-Law Sivadasan, Daughters-in-Law Anoma and Manel, Grand Children Dharini, Sainica, Arjuna and Rajesh – 133 South Lane, New Malden, Surrey, U.K.*

V. Joseph A. Mariathasan. B.Sc., FPRI.

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No one knows the heart ache
As I try to carry on alone,
I often think of the years together
And secret tears still flow.
God called you home so early
Because you loved HIM very dearly.
The family chain is broken now,
But sweet memories will live forever.
In life, you never left me for awhile
How can you be gone forever?

Fondly remembered on his first death anniversary by his loving wife Logi, and children, Sanjeev, Rajeev and Gajeev. – 57 Cassis Drive, Rexdale, Ontario M9V 4Z4, Canada.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

September 1 *6.30 p.m.* **Aid for Children of Tamils** *presents a* **Variety Performance** *at Hounslow Manor School, Prince Regents Road, Hounslow, Middx. For information: Tel: 081-423 5946.*

Sept. 2 *6.30 p.m.* **London School of Carnatic Music** *presents* **'An evening of Carnatic Music',** *performed by young artistes at Riverdale Hall, Lewisham Centre, London SE13. For tickets and information: Tel: 081-690 0401.*

Sept. 8 *7.00 p.m.* **Central-Vembadi Joint Dinner & Social** *at Alperton High School Annexe, Ealing Road, Wembley, Middx., in aid of Restoration Fund. For tickets & information: Tel: 081-543 8210, 081-642 5598, 081-689 4538.*

Sept. 15 *7.00 p.m.* **Chundikuli–St John's Past Pupils' Association A.G.M. & Dinner** *at Wood House, Sixth Form College, Wood House Road, London N12. For tickets and information: Tel: 081-468 7869, 081-368 2129 & 0727 59614.*

Sept. 23 *12.30 p.m.* **Skanda Varodaya College Old Students' Association, U.K. Branch Reunion Lunch, A.G.M. & Variety Entertainment** *at Lola Jones Hall, Tooting Leisure Centre, Greaves Place off Garratt Lane. For tickets & information Tel: 081-681 2052, 081-692 0823 & 0892 824661.*

Sept. 28 *7.45 p.m.* **Hindustani Flute** *by* **Raghunath Seth.**

Sept. 30 *6.45 p.m.* **Bharata Natyam** *by* **Kumari Nina** *with live music.*

Both above events at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ Tel: 071-381 3036-4608.

Continued From Page 23

approach. The coup was not motivated by Tamil Hindu interests in any way although it came 4 years after the violence of 1958 (and not two years after as stated in the text). The importance of the take-over of schools in late 1960 by the SLFP government to the Catholic Church, closely linked with the UNP at that time, is totally ignored. There was no explicit involvement of the UNP in the coup, but there was little doubt in the minds of the people about the 'non-political nature of the coup. The quoted sections also fail to explain why facts about the 'attempted coup of 1966' are obscure, and this failure raises some doubts in the context of the authors' attempt to equate the scales of electoral violence in 1970 and 1977, especially since, both during the electoral violence of 1977 and during the anti-Tamil violence which followed in its wake, the forces of law and order idly stood by, and the government explicitly stated its intention not to declare a state of emergency to protect the victims.

It is also easy to quote in hindsight Lord Avebury that the government overreacted to the 'amateur insurrection' of 1971, while no notice is taken of the fact that it was not just the UF government but all parliamentary political parties were in a state of panic until well after the situation was brought under control. The question of 'overreaction' has to be seen in the context of the fact that the government was in fact taken by surprise by the attack on police stations. What was sad about the insurgency was that it only made the government more dependent on the armed forces and led to a sharp increase in the military budget. An important factor which led to the isolation of the JVP was its rejection of the importance of the working class and its dependence on the youth instead. Also, the 'Self-criticism' by the JVP in 1977 quoted in the report was made during the period in which the JVP leadership was, for special reasons, under the influence of Bala Tampoe's Trotskyist group and does not constitute a political explanation of the behaviour of the JVP before or after 1971. The review also has failed to mention the brief period of political honeymoon between the UNP and the JVP leadership following the release of the leader of the JVP, and the encouragement given by the UNP government to the JVP to attack the SLFP and the parliamentary left, including the NSSP.

I also find that the report readily accepts the view that blames militant Buddhism for the communal conflict and fails to recognize the fact that the communal conflict is essentially linguo-ethnic and that the Roman Catholic Church in Sri Lanka which chose to ignore the national question right up to 1977 became increasingly divided on ethnic lines after the violence of 1977 and subsequent events in the north. Sinhala-Buddhism is a political smokescreen whose usefulness has long been on the decline and every attempt to attach excessive importance to it merely helps divert attention from more fundamental issues.

The political situation has changed considerably at least for the JVP, since the publication of the report and the recommendations in the report also need to be reviewed in the light of recent events. The difficulty that such studies face arise out of a desire to judge apolitically issues which are intensely political and require political solutions.

S. Sivasegaram

Mahajana Open Day

The two teams that took part in the cricket match.

Mahajana College Old Students' Association in U.K. organised their annual reunion and A.G.M. in the form of an open day on 29.7.90 at Manor Park, New Malden, Surrey. The day's programme started with a very enjoyable cricket match between the Old Students' Cricket team and Skanda Varodaya College Old Students' team, in which the latter were winners. Barbecue lunch and drinks were served and a sports meet for children and ladies was organised. Indoor games like carom, chess and card games and outdoor games like Soccer, Tennis and Rounders kept all the invitees busy and entertained and the park was a hive of activity. The day's proceeding were wound up at 9 p.m. after dinner, the A.G.M. and a few musical items.

Bharata Natya Arangetram

The Arangetram of 16-year-old **Aruntha** *daughter of Mr & Mrs S. Amirthalingam of East Ham, London E6, takes place at the Broadway Theatre, Town Hall, Barking, Essex at 6.30 p.m. on Saturday, 8.9.90. She is a disciple of Mrs Vijayambigai Indra Kumar, the well known dancer and choreographer. The chief guest is Prof. Sita Narasimhan of Cambridge University and the guests of honour are Her Worship Mrs Sally Murray, Mayoress of Newham & Mr. Murray.*

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Jana's Great Day

The Bharatha Natya Arangetram of **Selvi Janandhana Kaladhini,** *16-year-old daughter of Dr. & Mrs. Jeganmohan of Bromley, Kent takes place at the Great Hall, Bromley Civic Centre, Rochester Avenue, Bromley on 1.9.90 at 7 p.m.*

Jana had shown great enthusiasm for Bharatha Natyam at the tender age of 6, and came under the tutelage of her aunt and exponent of this dance form, Mrs. Sivasakthy Sivanesan, when she was 10 years old. She was later a student of Mrs. Sudharshini Ramachandra, a graduate of the hallowed Institute of Kalashetra. Jana has within a period of 2½ years of intensive training attained a high standard of excellence in this most exquisite and ancient dance form inspite of her academic involvements. She is being accompanied by a galaxy of leading artistes at her Arangetram. Besides her famous Guru at Nattuvangam, Mrs. Sivasakthy Sivanesan and Mrs. Priyatharshana Yogarajah will be the Vocal accompanists, Adayar Krishnamoorthy of Kalashetra, renowned Guru of several miruthangists would be at the Miruthangam. The enchanting violinist Sri Gothandapani and Rupavahini fame Sundaralaxmy on the Veena will lend able support. A grand show of melody, rhythm and dance is assured.

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